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MASS MEDIA IN THE FAMILY SETTING:

Social Patterns in Media Availability and Use by Parents

Report on a Study of

AMERICA'S CHILDREN AND THE MASS MEDIA

March 1980

NEWSPAPER READERSHIP PROJECT

This study is one of a series of research studies conducted under the auspices of the Newspaper Readership Project, an industry-wide effort to promote circulation and readership.

AMERICA'S CHILDREN AND THE MASS MEDIA

PREFACE

In June 1978, the Newspaper Advertising Bureau conducted a nationwide study of how children and adolescents use and feel about the media -- TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, movies, comic books, and books. Personal interviews were conducted by the Child Research Service Inc.-Center for Family Research in a probability sample of 817 households with 1,156 children and with their mothers. The children interviewed in these households constitute a nationally representative sample of 6 to 17 year-olds in American homes.

The detailed findings of this survey are presented in a series of reports analyzing the family settings in which the children are being raised and their parents' media habits and attitudes; the children's use of newspapers; their media world; and their newspaper use in America's classrooms. A separate technical report describes the sampling plan, questionnaires, and field work procedures employed for this survey. Earlier NAB publications based on findings from the study include a booklet, Children, Mothers and Newspapers, that provided an initial overview of major findings, and a report, Children, Movie-Going and the Newspaper, that analyzes the film preferences and habits of the children.

Responsibility for the study design, analysis and report-writing was shared equally by Albert E. Gollin and Thelma Anderson of NAB's Research Department.

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HIGHLIGHTS

Families that comprise a representative sample of American households with children age 6 to 17 were interviewed as part of a nationwide study of the media habits and attitudes of children and their mothers. Data for this report come from the sample of mothers, who provided information on household characteristics and family media use. Here are the principal findings:

1. Great variations exist in the economic and social character of the family settings within which children are initially -- and most heavily -- exposed to all mass media. These differences affect the availability of some media -- newspapers in particular -- and the extent of their use in many significant ways. A cluster of attributes define the special situations of children growing up in households with both parents or only one parent present. Most children in the latter households are doubly disadvantaged when it comes to access to newspapers and other print media and to the subtle encouragement to the development of their reading habits that is represented by their parents' own reliance on the printed word.

2. Newspapers are available in nine out of ten homes regularly or occasionally, taking both dailies and Sunday papers into account. Dailies enter the homes of 70% of families on all five weekdays, and a Sunday or weekend edition is available to 71% on all four weekends. These proportions varied only marginally in the homes of children of differing ages, but differed greatly among families at different class levels. Nonwhite and single-parent households took a daily or Sunday paper significantly less often than other types of families.

3. Newspaper readership followed the same lines of social cleavage as availability, being generally higher on all measures in families with higher social or economic status for mothers and fathers alike. The Sunday paper is read more often than the daily paper in most families.

4. Four parts of the daily paper are most often read by mothers: local news (by 73%), national news (by 55%), personal advice columns (by 49%), and the women's pages (by 47%). Better-educated mothers were more faithful readers of twelve out of nineteen specific types of editorial content, and showed stronger than average interest in hard news of all types, as did working mothers.

5. Mothers are aware of their children's newspaper reading and hold highly favorable attitudes toward their children's reading of newspapers, not only in general but in classrooms as well. Mothers

in higher-status families endorsed the idea more warmly, but the level of approval was substantial for children of all ages and at all class levels.

6. Children also receive a good deal of positive encouragement to read newspapers in the form of parental highlighting of specific items in the paper: 70% of them have things in the paper brought to their attention by their mothers. Again, availability and parental readership affect the likelihood that mothers talk about items in the paper with their children, thus stimulating their interest in newspaper content.

7. Television occupies a central place in the homes and media diets of families with children in these age groups. Almost three households in five have more than one set, and over one-third of the children (35%) have a set available for their personal use. The older the child and the more favored the family background the more likely is this to be the case.

8. TV sets are on an average of six hours a day, and are watched by mothers for an average of nearly three of those hours. Watching is heavier among parents who are lower in social-economic status, especially by mothers.

9. The prevailing family climates surrounding children's watching of TV contain ambivalent elements. More than three-quarters (77%) of the children had mothers who approved of them watching TV, but rules about the programs deemed appropriate or the amount of TV-watching time parents felt was acceptable often accompanied this general attitude of approval, especially in the case of the youngest group of children. Setting rules varied with the ages of the children and to some extent with the family's social class. Children's program viewing was controlled frequently by parental suggestions about what to watch, as well as by restrictions that parents may seek to impose.

10. The radio is a standard fixture in all American households, turned on for an average of 3-1/3 hours, and listened to by mothers about two-thirds of that time. Music, news, weather and talk shows form the main staples in their daily radio diet; radio seems to accompany mothers' daily round of activities without prejudice to their uses of other media. They were aware of their children's radio listening and approved of it as an activity.

11. Parents' use of books and magazines was also studied for the light it can shed on general family orientations to print media. One or more magazines is brought into the home of 72% of the children, and an estimated 21 books are bought or borrowed by parents in the average year. Use of these print media is strongly affected by family social class level: those with more education or higher family incomes

make correspondingly heavier use of books and magazines. As many as one-half of children in lower status families rarely if ever see their mother or father reading a book.

12. Parental values about children's book and magazine reading are strongly inclined in a favorable direction. Reading is a good thing, an attitude held even by parents who do little reading themselves. They are alert to the children's own reading practices and try to influence the kind of things brought into the home in a majority of cases. Positive efforts to encourage children's reading habits are frequently made, especially when the children are young, by buying them books as gifts and by reading to them.

13. News entering the home through the mass media is substantial in volume, judging by the extent to which mothers say they themselves read or hear it on a daily basis. The vital contribution that news can make to children's educational and social development is one of the reasons often mentioned as a basis for approving of newspapers and television for children.

14. Families do not simply accept the agenda of national concerns set out in news coverage by the mass media, but shape their own agenda according to the potential or actual impact of issues or topics on the family itself. This is evident in the prominence accorded to each of ten newsworthy topics in family conversations. Matters of more immediate or pressing concern dominated; news about local and national government or foreign affairs were rarely discussed with any frequency.

15. The family emerges from these findings as exerting an active force in shaping the environment that surrounds children's experiences with and changing uses of the mass media in their childhood and adolescent years. Parental values and media uses vary considerably, primarily along social class lines. The crucial mediating role that parents play -- in making media available to children, providing them with models of adult behavior, and stimulating or regulating their use for the children -- needs to be kept in mind in devising strategies for increasing newspaper reading among children. One route to achieving this goal over the long term is by better serving the current needs of their parents on a continuing basis.

INTRODUCTION

How do children form their mass media habits and interests, as well as the attitudes they take toward media content? How do children's interests in news about the wider world grow or change as they mature, in relation to their other life interests? How do access to the media and climates of approval or disapproval -- largely determined by parental or family media practices -- affect the children's own media behavior? And what is the place of newspapers in these developmental trends?

The purpose of this study of children, adolescents and their mothers, whose findings are reported in a series of Newspaper Readership Project publications, is to answer the questions posed above: to show how mass media interests and behavior are formed and changed during the ages between six and seventeen; to identify the roles played by family, school and other influences in these developmental processes; and to produce findings or refine methods derived from a nationwide survey that can serve as benchmarks for others who may wish to study youthful segments of the population in their own communities.

In recent years a substantial body of research has evolved that deals with the ways children acquire a taste for television programming and with some consequences of their extensive TV watching. These studies have grown out of widespread parental and official concerns with violence and with certain forms of advertising on TV as they may affect children, particularly younger ones. By comparison, research on children's newspaper reading habits or attitudes toward newspaper editorial content and other printed matter is much less prevalent, and findings on these topics often are submerged in the framework of studies of *childhood political socialization*: the processes by which children learn about the political culture and acquire politically relevant attitudes, values and knowledge. Another aim of this study, therefore, is to fill gaps in available knowledge on children and newspapers by a detailed examination of newspaper use in the childhood and adolescent years.

In this report we will deal primarily with the social environments within which children's media behavior and interests are formed, focusing in particular on the *family setting* and *parental orientations* that may color or affect their children's media usage and attitudes. A major goal is to draw a detailed portrait of the extent and character of mass media use in the families of the children we have studied. The variables introduced here will reappear in other reports that document their role as *influences* upon children's media attitudes and behavior, directly or indirectly shaping their media perceptions, evaluations of media content, and their exposure to the mass media during their formative years.

Sampling Children and Their Families

The data reported here came primarily from interviews with the mother or other principal child-caring adult in a national probability sample of 817 households from which 1,156 children age 6 to 17 were also selected for interviewing. Interviews were conducted at 70 locations in thirty states, following a sampling plan that gave appropriate weight to region, population size, and household distribution in urban, suburban and rural areas.[1] No more than two children per eligible household were interviewed; all households initially contacted that had one or more children age 6-17 were defined as eligible for inclusion in the survey. Nationally, 54% of families contained one or more children under age 18; of these, 56% had one or more age 6-17, according to recent U.S. Government statistics. Thus, our data come from a nationally representative segment of American families, those deemed eligible, rather than from the cross-section samples of all American households that are usually employed in national studies of adult media audiences.

Interviews in eligible households were first sought with the mother or other principal child-caring adult, and then separately with her child or children. Great care was taken by specially trained interviewers from the Child Research Service -- Center for Family Research to ensure both privacy and frankness in the interview and comprehension by even the youngest children of the meaning of the questions. Many visual aids were specially devised to add greater clarity to the questions and response categories. Interviews were

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1) A fuller description of the study's sampling plan and field work procedures is contained in the technical report of the Center for Family Research, which is part of this series of NAB reports on the study of children and adolescents and their mothers.

successfully conducted with a parent in 94% of the families; as 89% of these were with the mother, we will generally refer to "mothers" as the prime source of information on household characteristics and family media use.

Family Demographics

The substantial variations in the social and economic composition of interviewed families provide a firm basis for assessing differences in the general outlook and values that underlie use of the mass media by parents and children. The basic demographic data on the families of children in different age groups are shown below (see table 1). Of particular interest are the family structure (households with one or both parents present) and the employment status of the children's mothers. Both are key factors shaping parent-child interactions, and thus help to determine how pervasive are the influences that parents can exert on their children's media habits and preferences.

A steady growth can be seen in the ranks of working mothers -- especially those employed full time -- in the families of progressively older children. Two-thirds of 6-8 year-old children have non-working mothers, a proportion that declines steadily to 42 percent among older teenagers. While the children's age has much to do with this, economic need and lifestyle aspirations also are factors. As other data show, among mothers in single-parent households, 38 percent work full time, compared with 25 percent in households with both parents present. And while the proportion of full-time working mothers is similar across social class levels, the proportion of part-time working mothers increases with education and family income, suggesting that a job (and the associated benefits) is coming to be preferred to the housewife's role among women with school-age children.[1]

Almost all of the fathers in various types of households are working full time. Only among non-white fathers (almost 8 percent of whom were unemployed) is there a sizeable departure from the overall unemployment rate of 2 percent. The economic consequences of the absence of a working father are severe: 63 percent of such families earned less than $10,000, compared with only 15 percent of families with a working father in the house.

The educational attainment of the children's parents reflects the national trend of steadily increasing levels in recent decades, especially among their fathers. A high school diploma or some time spent in college is the norm in most families. In addition to its impact on family income, educational attainment has a wide range of direct and indirect effects on attitudes and values, both personal and parental[2], and will be shown to influence the media use of parents and children in a number of important ways.

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1) For data from another recent Readership Project study that strongly supports this view, see Women and the Newspapers in the 1970s (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1979).

2) See Herbert H. Hyman et al., The Enduring Effects of Education (University of Chicago Press, 1975) for a review of findings from numerous studies on this point.

Table 1

Social and Economic Status of Sampled Families
(In Percentages)

		Families of Children Age:				Total
Parents' Employment Status		6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	Families
	(N)[1]=	(345)	(283)	(275)	(253)	(817)
Mother works full time		21	24	28	43	27
Mother works part time		13	14	17	14	15
Mother is housewife		66	62	56	42	58
	(N)[2]	(297)	(236)	(236)	(215)	(691)
Father works full time		96	94	97	97	96
	(N)[3]	(266)	(208)	(193)	(170)	(582)
Education of Mother						
Less than high school graduate		25	30	29	28	28
High school graduate		48	45	46	48	46
Some college, plus		27	25	25	23	26
	(N)[4]=	(313)	(249)	(249)	(225)	(727)
Education of Father						
Less than high school graduate		21	27	22	23	22
High school graduate		38	38	44	46	41
Some college, plus		41	35	34	31	37
	(N)[5]	(275)	(216)	(206)	(180)	(610)
Family Income						
Less than $10,000		25	26	26	21	26
$10,000 - $14,999		21	15	8	13	16
$15,000 - $19,999		19	23	20	21	19
$20,000 plus		27	27	36	31	29
Refused/NA		7	9	10	14	10

Table 1

Social and Economic Status of Sampled Families (Continued)
(In Percentages)

	Families of Children Age:				Total
	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	Families
Racial Group					
White	80	79	82	79	80
Black	15	16	14	15	14
Other (Asian, Chicano, etc.)	5	5	4	5	5
Family Structure					
Both male and female heads	80	83	82	81	80
Single parent head	20	17	18	19	20

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1) Percentages in Total Families column are based on adult sample; percentages for children are based on family backgrounds of children in each age group. Unless indicated, percentages are based on total (N) in each column; those not ascertained are generally excluded from bases.

2) Based only on mothers in these three categories.

3) Only employed fathers (93% of all fathers) in families with both parents present are included in percentage base.

4) Based only on mothers who were interviewed; other adults are excluded.

5) Only fathers in families with both parents present are included in percentage base.

As most adult media audience studies have shown, family income is a key variable influencing the use of and preference for certain mass media -- newspapers most notably. Income varied little by the ages of the children in the study: families of older children, as could be expected, had somewhat higher levels. By far the sharpest contrasts among families exist for two-parent vs. single-parent households and between white and non-white families. The proportion of under $10,000 households among single-parent families was 74 percent, compared with only 17 percent of those with both parents present. The difference between white and non-white families was almost equally dramatic: 20 percent of the former vs. 68 percent of the latter earned less than $10,000.

The close relationships that exist among these socioeconomic variables in defining the family situation of the children can be seen clearly in some other differences between two-parent and single-parent households. About four-fifths of children in all four age groups live in households with both parents present. But (as seen in table 2) the two types of families display strikingly different demographic profiles that are not only linked with contrasting use of the mass media, as we will show, but also define social and economic realities that can have generally wideranging effects on child-rearing practices and attitudes. For, as these data show, children growing up in single-parent households in all parts of the country belong to families in which their mothers have far fewer educational advantages, much less income to draw upon as resources, and are home less because more of them are working.

To round off this snapshot of family demographics, we will briefly review some data on their residential location. Families with children generally sink deeper roots into their communities, so it is not surprising that almost one half (49%) of the families have lived in their current areas for ten years or more -- one-quarter for twenty years or longer. Those with younger children show slightly shorter periods of settling in, and their parents are also somewhat less likely to own homes.

The most significant variations in residential patterns are related to income. Those with incomes under $10,000 are almost twice as likely as those earning more (19% vs. 11%) to have settled in within the past two years. Correlatively, the proportion of home-owning families rises steeply with income: 33% of those earning under $10,000; 71% of those with incomes between $10 - $20,000; and fully 93% of families earning $20,000 or more are home owners. Given this strong relationship, it is not surprising that home ownership is significantly lower among non-white families (38%), single-parent households (31%), and residents of central cities (48%).

In geographic terms, the families were distributed representatively across the nation's four principal regions. Almost one-third lives in the central cities of larger metropolitan areas, and another one-quarter lives in communities in their suburban fringes. Racial and income differences among those living in these locations fell along

Table 2

Characteristics of Single and Two-Parent Households
(In Percentages)

Family/Parental Status[1]		Households with: Both Parents Present	Households with: One Parent Present
	(N) =	(655)	(162)
Mother's Employment Status			
Works full time		25	38
Works part time		16	10
Housewife		59	52
	(N)[2] =	(579)	(112)
Mother's Education			
Less than high school graduate		24	47
High school graduate		48	36
Some college, plus		28	17
Family Income			
Less than $10,000		17	74
$10,000 - $19,999		44	19
$20,000 plus		39	7
	(N)[3] =	(583)	(149)
Race			
White		87	55
Non-white		13	45
Geographic Location			
Metro central city		26	56
Suburban fringe		30	12
Small towns and rural		45	32

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1) Respondents or families for whom information was not ascertained are excluded from the bases for percentaging.

2) Percentages based only on mothers interviewed who fell into these three categories.

3) Those who refused to supply income data are excluded.

Table 3

Residency and Geographic Distribution of Sampled Families[1]

(In Percentages)

		Families of Children Age:				Total
		6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	Families
	(N) =	(345)	(283)	(275)	(253)	(817)
Residency in Area						
Less than 2 years		17	1[illegible]	9	10	14
Two up to 9 years		46	39	31	30	38
Ten up to 19 years		17	24	31	31	24
Twenty years plus		20	24	28	29	25
Housing Status						
Owns home		67	66	74	72	68
Rents home		33	34	26	28	32
	(N) =	(327)	(271)	(260)	(243)	(780)
Geographic Region						
Northeast		24	26	28	26	26
North Central		27	24	27	30	27
South		35	37	31	24	31
West		15	14	14	20	16
Geographic Location						
Metro central city		32	34	33	33	32
Suburban fringe		25	24	29	27	26
Small towns and rural		43	42	38	41	42

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[1] See Footnote 1, Table 1, for definitions of bases for percentages.

familiar lines. Two-thirds (66%) of non-white families live in central city areas, vs. only 23 percent of white families. And, while almost one-half (48%) of the lowest income group lives in central cities, only 25 percent of families earning over $20,000 did so.

To summarize, the demography of these American families appears to be most sharply differentiated along class and racial lines. Closely linked with both of these is the presence of both parents or only one parent in the children's households. Taken together, these are the salient social factors that chiefly define the varied family settings within which the media habits of children are initially formed and undergo changes as they mature.

MASS MEDIA IN THE FAMILY SETTING

The looming presence of the mass communications media in the average American household is by now a well-established fact. The generation of children studied here, born in the decades of the 1960s and early 1970s, are the inheritors of successive media explosions in America in the post-war era. The sights, sounds, and texts of broadcast and print media have formed ever-present elements in the web of communications that surrounds them in their homes. Thus, as we will show, unlike earlier generations, for whom first radio and then television emerged to compete for attention with newspapers and other print media, the children we studied have for the most part been exposed to all the major media from their earliest days. Moreover, the familiarity and attractiveness of the media as objects of interest are quite likely to have been reinforced by the attention paid to them by the children's parents, thus adding to their intrinsic appeals the stamp of wholesale acceptance by the most important figures in children's lives.

This section will be devoted to a portrayal of the extent to which the mass media have been incorporated into the households of today's children, and their own parents' use of and attitudes toward the media. Underlying the analysis of these facts is the assumption that media availabilities and parental attitudes (expressed both in words and actions) are prime determinants of children's perceptions and use of the mass media, especially in the earliest years when parental authority and influence are at their highest levels. This assumption will be tested subsequently in other analyses of the children's own media use patterns.

Availability of Newspapers in the Home

Daily or Sunday newspapers are available in the homes of nine out of ten American families on a regular or occasional basis during the average month. But the extent of availability is by no means uniform. While home delivery is of course the key factor underlying availability in three out of five homes, daily papers are brought into the homes, regularly or occasionally, by almost two-thirds (64%) of those who don't get home delivery. Thus, the penetration of the daily newspaper on all five weekdays amounts to 70 percent of households. Only one home in six (16%) fails to take a daily paper with any frequency, a proportion that varied little among families with younger or older children.

Availability of a daily paper on a regular basis is affected by a number of factors. Younger children have younger parents and newspapers are taken less often by young adults. Thus, the proportion of homes taking a daily paper regularly rises slightly in homes of progressively older children. But availability depends less on age than upon the social class factors highlighted earlier: income, education, race, and family structure. For example, home delivery varied with the mother's education, rising from 40 percent in homes where she failed to earn a high school diploma up to 74 percent in the homes of college-trained mothers. Differences in income levels are equally sharp: only one-third of families with incomes under $10,000 had home delivery, compared with 74 percent of homes with family incomes over $20,000. Two-thirds of white households vs. 31 percent of non-white homes had a daily paper delivered; correlatively, in only 34 percent of single-parent households (vs. 66% in two-parent homes) was a paper delivered daily.

Variations in Sunday newspaper availability were equally marked, and the same social factors emerge as significant correlates of its regular or occasional appearance in the children's homes. Only one home in five (19%) failed to take a Sunday or weekend paper at least once a month, either by delivery or purchase, a proportion that hardly varied in homes of younger or older children. But one-third of homes with incomes below $10,000 or where mothers were not high school graduates took no Sunday paper. An equally high proportion (34%) of single-parent homes failed to take at least one Sunday paper in the month.

Among those getting a daily paper, either delivered or purchased, 62 percent took an afternoon paper and 48 percent had a morning paper. Only minor demographic variations in this overall split existed among these families. As these figures suggest, differences linked with the prevalence of two-a-day newspaper households account for some of the variation. Here again, social class factors play a substantial role. Families more favorably situated generally showed proportionately

Table 4

Daily and Sunday Newspaper Availability in Children's Homes
(In Percentages)

	Families of Children Age:				Total
	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	Families
(N) =	(345)	(283)	(275)	(253)	(817)
Home Delivery of Daily Papers	57	58	64	65	60
Paper Brought Into Home					
Five days a week	23	26	27	32	27
No (0) weekdays	34	36	36	36	36
Average No. Weekdays	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.3	2.1
(N)[1] =	(147)	(119)	(99)	(89)	(330)
Daily Household Newspaper Availability					
All five weekdays	69	70	74	78	70
Some weekdays	17	13	13	11	14
No (0) weekdays	14	17	13	11	16
Home Delivery of Sunday/ Weekend Paper	59	58	62	64	60
Sunday Paper Brought Into Home					
All four Sundays	24	32	32	37	28
No (0) Sundays	44	43	42	38	44
Average No. Sundays	1.5	1.7	1.8	2.0	1.6
(N)[2] =	(140)	(119)	(105)	(92)	(328)
Total Monthly Sunday Paper Availability					
All four Sundays	69	71	74	77	71
Some Sundays	12	10	7	7	10
No (0) Sundays	19	19	19	16	19
Daily & Sunday Penetration					
Every day (weekdays & Sundays)	60	62	66	70	62
Some weekdays or Sundays	30	29	24	20	28
No weekdays or Sundays	10	9	10	10	10

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1) Based only on families not getting home delivery of a daily paper. Those bringing a daily home some days are not shown.

2) Based only on families not getting home delivery of a Sunday paper. Those bringing a Sunday paper home occasionally are not shown.

greater availability of both a.m. and p.m. papers. Geographic factors linked with the publishing times of the local dailies were also of some importance. The proportions of a.m. and p.m. newspaper households were as follows: in central cities, 56% and 50%; in the suburbs, 60% and 65%; and in small towns and rural areas, 34% and 69%. The only social category with greater a.m. than p.m. newspaper availability (62% vs. 44%) were non-white families; this reversal of the overall pattern stems largely from the clustering of non-white households in major metropolitan areas dominated by morning newspapers.

Newspaper penetration levels in the homes of children with different social and economic backgrounds show patterns that have been observed in other newspaper audience research based on cross-section samples of all American households.[1] What this sample of families enables us to pinpoint precisely is the availability of the newspaper in the specific milieus within which America's children are being raised. The data show clearly that social and economic factors are important not only as correlates of newspaper availability among today's adult population; they also affect the chances that newspapers will be familiar elements in the homes of the future generation. For as other studies have suggested, newspaper availability during childhood plays a significant role in the forming of adult readership habits.[2]

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1) See for example, The Daily Diet of News (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1978), which reports data from a 1977 nationwide survey of over 3,000 households.

2) For findings from the same nationwide readership survey that support this conclusion, see The Influence of Childhood Exposure to Newspapers on Adult Newspaper Habits (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1977).

These factors form a penetration barrier that has to be surmounted if tomorrow's newspaper audience is to be assured.

Parental Newspaper Readership

Availability offers the most direct means of fostering or actually encouraging children's reading of newspapers in the home. But their parent's reading habits can provide them with powerful models of appropriate or desirable adult behavior. Parental readership of and dependence on newspapers (and the other media) -- for news, entertainment, and consumer information -- establish images in their children's minds of how adults orient themselves to the wider world outside the family. The lessons are more easily learned and perhaps make a more indelible impression by being caught rather than taught, as are most values or attitudes acquired in parent-child interaction.

Parental readership of the daily newspaper generally follows the patterns described earlier for availability of newspapers in the home, as one would expect (see table 5). More mothers of older children tended to read a paper regularly, and they were more likely to have read a paper yesterday. Sixty percent of the mothers are regular readers and two-thirds read a daily paper yesterday. The man in the house, according to his wife's report, was even more likely to be a regular newspaper reader, especially in the homes of older children. (These findings echo those found in other studies of age differences in adult newspaper reading, and thus obviously stem from the parents' ages, not those of their children.) Readership of a Sunday or weekend paper is substantial: 72 percent of mothers in homes receiving it reported reading it all four Sundays, and only 6 percent didn't read at least one issue. Thus, as between the two, the Sunday newspaper seems to have a more devoted following than the daily paper in the families of today's generation of children.

As was true of variations in availability, social class differences in daily newspaper readership are profound, and differences in Sunday readership only slightly less so (see table 6). Depending upon the indicator chosen, mothers in the highest status categories (i.e., better educated, highest family income) show daily readership levels that are between one-third and two-thirds higher than mothers in the lowest category. Allied to these findings are sharp differences in readership levels by race and family structure. Better than two-thirds of mothers in white families or in two-parent households were yesterday readers, vs. one half of mothers in single-parent or non-white homes. Sunday paper readership levels show similar (though less profound) differences among families in different class or racial categories.

Data from the survey on the daily newspaper reading of the children's fathers (not shown here) display the same wide-ranging class-related differences. One clear inference from these findings is that children from families in less fortunate circumstances are doubly affected adversely in their chances to develop newspaper reading habits. They are less likely to find a newspaper in their homes, and the strong example that can be provided by parents with regular

Table 5

Newspaper Reading of Parents: Daily and Sunday
(In Percentages)

	Families of Children Age:				Total
	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	Families
(N) =	(345)	(283)	(275)	(253)	(817)
Read a Daily Paper Yesterday[1]	63	64	71	74	66
Mother's Daily Reading Frequency					
Past week: all 5 days	57	57	63	68	60
Past week: no (0) days	25	21	16	18	21
Average days read paper	3.3	3.4	3.7	3.8	3.5
Father's Daily Reading Frequency					
Past week: all 5 days	65	66	70	75	67
Past week: no (0) days	14	15	13	12	15
Average days read paper	3.7	3.8	3.9	4.1	3.8
(N)[2] =	(296)	(241)	(230)	(204)	(680)
Mother's Sunday Paper Reading					
Past month: all 4 Sundays	70	69	74	73	72
Past month: no (0) Sundays	6	9	5	6	6
Average issues read	3.3	3.2	3.4	3.4	3.3
(N)[3] =	(270)	(223)	(210)	(202)	(630)

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1) Based on total adult respondents, 89% of whom were mothers.

2) Based on estimates of father's reading reported by mother in households where a male parent was present.

3) Based on households getting one or more Sunday papers in past month.

newspaper reading habits is much less commonly available to them. For this sizable (and in the case of racial minorities growing) segment of young America, the presence of the newspaper in classrooms becomes even more critical in fostering adult reading habits.[1]

Newspaper Content Preferences of Mothers

We asked mothers how often they usually read or look at nineteen specific parts of the daily paper: most or some of the time or never. Their answers show that educational differences, one of the most prominent indicators of social class, not only affect the availability and readership of newspapers. They also strongly influence the importance that various types of newspaper content have for the children's mothers, which may in turn subtly influence the way children themselves come to value the newspaper, especially if certain parts of the paper become the subject of conversation or comment between them. (That this possibility is more than mere speculation will be shown in later sections.)

Only four parts of the paper regularly engage the attention of a majority or near-majority of the mothers: local news, national news, personal advice columns, and the traditional women's pages of the daily paper (see table 7). Foreign news, entertainment coverage (listings, gossip items), display advertising, obituaries and editorial pages

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1) For further evidence on this point, see Daily Newspapers in American Classrooms (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1979), another report in this series.

Table 6

Economic and Social Factors in Mothers' Newspaper Readership: Daily and Sunday

	Proportion of Mothers Who:		
	Read a Daily Yesterday	Read a Daily Regularly (5 x Week)	Read a Sunday Regularly[1] (4 x Month)
Total Sample of Mothers	66%	60%	72%
Mother's Education			
Less than high school grad.	51	44	60
High school graduate	68	62	75
Some college, plus	77	75	77
Family Income			
Less than $10,000	46	40	53
$10,000 - $19,999	69	61	75
$20,000 plus	79	75	80
Mother's Employment Status			
Works full time	68	61	72
Works part time	71	68	76
Housewife	65	59	73
Family Structure			
Both male & female heads	70	64	75
Single parent head	51	43	57
Race			
White families	69	64	75
Non-white families	52	43	60

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1) Based only on households in each category getting one or more Sunday papers in past month.

comprise another layer of interest, read regularly by one-third or more of the women. A third set of items, read regularly by about one-fourth or less, includes classified ads, comics, social news (perhaps surprisingly low in readership), and hobby or gardening items. Fewer than one in five mothers regularly read sports or financial coverage, political columnists, or such features as sports, book reviews, and puzzles.

Table 7

Mothers' Preferences for Different Parts of the Daily Paper
(In Percentages)

		Education of Mothers:		
	Total Mothers	Less Than H.S. Grad.	H.S. Grad.	Some College, Plus
Parts of Daily Paper Read Most of the Time (N) =	(817)	(230)	(374)	(211)
Local news	73	60	77	82
National news	55	36	56	73
Personal advice (e.g., Dear Abby)	49	44	54	47*
Women's pages (fashion, foods, recipes)	47	40	48	53
Foreign news (countries, wars)	42	28	38	63
Ads other than classified	39	39	39	40*
Obituaries	38	36	43	33*
Entertainment listings, reviews	36	30	38	40
Editorials, Editors' pages	35	24	35	47
Stories about celebrities, show business	33	30	35	34*
Classified ads	29	35	29	23*
Comics or jokes	27	18	29	31
Social news (weddings, parties)	24	25	25	21*
Hobbies, gardening	23	18	24	25
Political columnists	18	14	16	28
Sports	17	11	19	20
Book reviews, ads	16	10	15	25
Puzzles or games	11	4	14	11*
Financial, business news	10	7	8	16

In all but seven cases (shown with an asterisk in Table 7), the higher the educational attainment the greater the readership of the listed items. While the magnitude of some differences may be affected by a "prestige bias" in claiming readership to which the college-trained may be less immune, on the whole the data show the latter group to be regularly involved with significantly more parts of the paper, and especially those dealing with hard news or editorials: foreign news, national news, editorials and local news. This keener interest in news, moreover, is not restricted to newspaper reading habits alone. It is also characteristic of the better-educated with respect to TV news-watching, radio news-listening, and subscriptions to newsweeklies.

What these findings clearly show is that higher levels of formal education appreciably widen the effective scope of interests of women in the child-rearing years. So too does employment: other data from the survey (not shown here) confirm the fact that mothers holding full- or part-time jobs also display higher levels of readership of hard news items than do housewives[1]. It is reasonable to infer that such deeper interests are in various ways conveyed to their children, thus conferring upon the children of better educated mothers additional advantages that play a role in their political socialization.

Mothers' Views on Children's Newspaper Reading

So far we have been assuming that variations in parental reading habits and the availability of the newspapers in the home can have

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1) This finding has been confirmed by another recent Newspaper Readership Project survey. See Women and Newspapers in the 1970s (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1979).

significant implications for the forming of their children's perspectives on the newspaper. Parents' behavior, in other words, conveys messages about their values and attitudes to their children. Some other data from the survey can test this assumption, by showing how prevailing parental attitudes about the value of newspapers for their children differ among families. First, how aware are mothers of their children's reading of newspapers? Do they approve of them reading newspapers? Do they actively encourage their children to read by talking about items in the paper or bringing them to the attention of their children?

Mothers were asked these questions about each child who was also interviewed. Thus, the answers apply specifically to individual children, rather than simply expressing their mothers' general knowledge or attitudes. In describing these findings, therefore, our focus must shift from the 817 households to the 1,156 children in the study who were the subjects of the questions put to their mothers.

First, mothers seem to be alert to the fact of their children's use of newspapers. Fifty-four percent of the children were said to be readers, and 41 percent were not; in only 5 percent of the cases were mothers unable to say whether or not their children were newspaper readers. And the proportion of children asserted to be readers by their mothers agreed closely with the children's own claims, age group by age group (see Table 8).

Table 8

Mothers and Children as Sources on Children's Newspaper Reading
(In Percentages)

		Age of Children: 6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	Total Children
	(N) =	(345)	(283)	(275)	(253)	(1,156)
Mother:	Child reads the paper	34	52	67	72	54
Child:	Ever read a paper	33	60	74	81	61

The convergence between mothers and children in the aggregate is closest for the youngest group, who are presumably more consistently under the watchful eye of their mothers. But an opportunity factor -- the availability of newspapers in the home -- which, as we saw earlier, is only weakly correlated with the age of children in the household, is significantly linked with mothers' claims about their children's newspaper reading. In households where the newspaper was available all five weekdays (through purchase or home delivery), 63 percent of the children were said to be newspaper readers. This is in sharp contrast with the 49 percent of children in homes where the newspaper was available less regularly, or the barely 17 percent of children who, according to their mothers, read the newspaper in homes where the daily paper was not available at all. Thus, even with the low threshold for reading represented by the question put to the children's mothers, "Does (child) read the daily newspaper?", sizable variations in perceived reading appear as a result of the sheer availability of the daily paper on a weekly basis.[1]

Age and availability of newspapers in the home seem to account for much of the differences in children's reading perceived by their mothers. No other variables showed differences of comparable magnitude. Indeed, the social class factors examined earlier, which were closely correlated with availability and also with variations in parental newspaper reading failed to show appreciable differences in the proportion of children who read newspapers, as witnessed by their mothers.

The attitudes taken by mothers toward newspaper reading by their children were generally highly favorable. The mothers of one-third "strongly approved" and those of another 52 percent "approved" of their child reading newspapers. A miniscule 2 percent of children had mothers who disapproved. Given this overwhelmingly positive stance, the only substantial differences appeared in the intensity of approval (or feelings of indifference) expressed by the mothers. And in the voicing of strong approval, certain class values were apparent, joining age of children and availability of the daily paper as noticeable sources of variation. These latter differences are, however, mainly a matter of emphasis: approval of children's newspaper reading is quite general among mothers in all families (see table 9).

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1) The impact of availability on the children's own assertions about newspaper reading is detailed in another report in this series, Children and Newspapers (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980).

Table 9

Attitude of Mothers Toward Their Children's Newspaper Reading
(In Percentages)

	Attitude Toward Newspaper:				
	Strongly Approve	Approve	Disapprove (Incl. strongly)	Doesn't Matter To Me/NA[1]	100%= (N)
Total Sample of Children	33	52	2	13	(1156)
By Age of Child					
6-8	20	58	3	18	(345)
9-11	31	53	3	13	(283)
12-14	38	50	-	12	(275)
15-17	46	45	-	10	(253)
By Weekly Newspaper Availability					
Available all 5 weekdays	37	51	2	11	(832)
Available some weekdays	24	58	1	17	(158)
No (0) weekdays	19	53	2	26	(166)
By Mother's Education					
Less than high school graduate	25	57	2	16	(321)
High school graduate	30	55	2	14	(543)
Some college, plus	45	42	1	11	(290)
By Family Income					
Less than $10,000	25	59	2	14	(284)
$10,000 - $19,999	30	54	2	14	(408)
$20,000 plus	43	43	2	12	(347)

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1) Mothers saying "it doesn't matter" accounted for most (9-12%) of the percentages shown in this response category.

The most direct evidence of parental intervention in their children's newspaper reading practices is found in mothers' answers to the last of the three questions cited at the beginning of this section of the report. The findings strongly support our earlier surmise that active efforts to encourage a child's awareness and use of the newspapers are seen as an appropriate stimulus by a majority of mothers. They also display the contrasting sense of values in this regard that exists among mothers, variations that mainly run along now-familiar lines of social cleavage (see table 10).

Some mother-child discussions about things in the newspaper are part of the experience of 70 percent of children. The older they are, the more likely are such conversations to take place. But the most striking differences in the proportion of children exposed to this kind of stimulus appear in homes where the newspaper is available to varying degrees, in families at different class levels, and among children with working or housebound mothers.

The value of the newspaper for children as a source of conversational topics for mothers is clearly greater the more frequently it comes into the home. But, as we saw earlier, availability is itself closely related to variations in the social and economic status of families. Thus, it is not surprising to find the newspaper entering significantly more often into conversations between mothers and children in higher status families (whether measured by education or income), or in two-parent or white households. All of these interrelated measures of family social position weigh heavily in

Table 10

Mother's Stimulation of Children's Newspaper Reading
(In Percentages)

	Proportion of Children[1]	100% = (N)
Total Sample of Children	70	(1156)
By Age of Child		
6- 8	61	(345)
9-11	70	(283)
12-14	74	(275)
15-17	78	(253)
By Weekly Newspaper Availability		
Available all 5 weekdays	77	(832)
Available some weekdays	60	(158)
No (0) weekdays	42	(166)
By Mother's Education		
Less than high school graduate	56	(321)
High school graduate	73	(543)
Some college, plus	79	(290)
By Family Income		
Less than $10,000	57	(284)
$10,000 - $19,999	68	(408)
$20,000 plus	81	(347)
By Family Structure		
Both male and female heads	72	(940)
Single parent head	57	(216)
By Race		
White	73	(909)
Non-white	58	(226)
By Mother's Employment Status		
Works full time	75	(275)
Works part time	80	(143)
Housewife	68	(566)

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1) Question: "Do you ever talk to (child) about things in the newspaper or bring them to (his/her) attention?"

determining the prominence of the newspaper in the households of the children. Working mothers, who are more frequent readers and more attuned to hard news than housewives, are also somewhat more likely to draw on the newspaper in discussions with their children.

These findings complement and extend earlier ones by showing that children in families where the newspaper is a more prominent feature -- available more regularly, read more often and extensively by parents -- not only have their parents' evident reliance on newspapers to draw upon as models for their own behavior. They are also more likely to have their attention actively drawn to the value of the newspaper through the encouraging words of their mother.

Living with Television: Availability and Household Use

Television's pervasiveness in the families of this generation of children and adolescents has been established by numerous recent studies.[1] Data from this survey update the findings of other studies and go beyond them in several ways, by documenting the television use and preferences of children ranging more widely in age (6-17) than is typical of earlier studies and by relating their television behavior to other media use, newspapers in particular.

The availability of television to children is universal. Almost all (99.4%) homes had at least one set in working order. Three-fifths

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1) An exhaustive review of research on television use and effects is provided in George Comstock et al., Television and Human Behavior (Columbia University Press, 1978), especially chapter 5 dealing with children -- "one highly attracted public" in the authors' phrase.

(59%) had more than one set, a proportion that rises to two-thirds in the homes of teenagers. In fact, over one-third (35%) of the children had a set of their own, or one available primarily for their use. The availability of a set for the child's personal use varied from 25 percent for 6-8 year olds to 45 percent for the older teenagers. Those in poorer or less socially advantaged homes had correspondingly fewer sets available to them (see table 11).

On an average weekday a TV set was on for 6 hours. This average estimate by mothers conceals some important variations. In the homes of 26 percent (termed "heavy TV" households later on in this analysis), a set was on for 9 hours or more; in another 42 percent, a set was on 5-8 hours, leaving one-third of children's homes in which a set was on 4 hours or less. HUT level estimates were appreciably lower in the families of college-educated mothers and those with incomes over $20,000. But they hardly varied in homes with children of different ages, a fact that corresponds with the children's own reported watching of television.

Mothers' own TV watching also showed comparable variations. About one-half said they watched television for 3 hours or more. Watching was appreciably greater among those with the least education or income, among nonwhite mothers, and housewives. It varied little among mothers of younger or older children. The same patterns appear in mothers' estimates of the average time spent watching TV daily by the children's fathers, although family differences are more muted in this regard.

Table 11

Availability and Household Use of TV in Children's Families

	Ave. No. of TV Sets	Ave. Daily HUT Level (minutes)	Ave. Time Mother Watches TV (minutes)	Ave. Time Father Watches TV[1] (minutes)
Total Sample of Families	1.9	361	173	148
By Age of Child				
6- 8	1.7	360	174	145
9-11	1.8	360	169	138
12-14	2.0	357	160	143
15-17	2.1	375	171	163
By Mother's Education				
Less than HS Graduate	1.6	375	208	151
HS Graduate	2.0	381	168	161
Some College, plus	2.1	309	142	120
By Family Income				
Less than $10,000	1.5	377	206	159
$10,000 - 19,999	1.8	378	167	149
$20,000 plus	2.2	331	149	141
By Race				
White	1.9	357	162	147
Non-white	1.7	370	219	152

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1) Based on mothers' reports in families where a male household head was present.

Thus, in these basic respects, television establishes a lively presence in children's families: available universally; in more than one room in a majority of homes; broadcasting images and sounds during an average of one-third of the family's waking hours; and at the center of their parents' attention for substantial amounts of that time.

Parental Attitudes Toward Children's Use of TV

The implicit stamp of approval represented by these facts is made explicit by the data on mothers' attitudes toward their children's TV-watching. When asked specifically about each child, over three-quarters (77%) of their mothers expressed approval of his or her watching TV, and another 11 percent expressed indifference. Family differences were insignificant in this regard: the general climate in American homes is supportive and approving of children's use of television (see table 12).

Table 12

Mothers' Attitudes Toward Their Children's TV Watching

	Proportion whose mothers say:				
	Strongly Approve	Approve	Disapprove (including strongly)	Doesn't Matter to Me/NA	100%= (N)
Total Sample of Children	8	69	10	13	(1156)
By Age of Child					
6- 8	10	70	9	11	(345)
9-11	7	69	11	13	(283)
12-14	7	68	11	14	(275)
15-17	9	68	7	16	(253)

This is not to say that a situation of laissez-faire exists in most families when it comes to children's TV-viewing. In the homes of 58 percent of the children, parents set rules to control the kinds of TV programs they can watch. And 44 percent of the children confront parental rules about how much TV they can watch. Parents use tactics of encouragement as well. Mothers of 57 percent of the children said they make suggestions or encourage their child to watch particular programs.[1] Thus, both constraint and prodding are among the tools frequently used by parents to discipline and guide their children's use of television.

Parental control or guidance of children's TV-viewing is primarily a function of two variables: the age of the child and the family's social class position. Rule-setting of both types is at its peak for the very youngest group of children, those age 6-8, as is positive encouragement by their mothers to watch certain programs. The incidence of both modes of parental control drops off sharply for progressively older children (see table 13). By the late teens, only about one-quarter of the children are said to confront family rules about their use of television; only two-fifths (42%) of those age 15-17 ever receive specific program suggestions from their mothers. The

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1) When asked which programs, mothers mentioned a wide variety of specific programs or generic categories of programs. The latter type predominated: "educational" (27%), "children's specials" (22%), "documentaries" (16%), "dramas, serials or plays" (13%), and "children's shows" (11%). The most often-mentioned specific program was "Sesame Street", which 13% of the children were encouraged to watch, most of whom were in the 6-8 year age group.

Table 13

Family Rules and Suggestions about Children's TV Watching[1]

	Proportion who say:		
	Has rules about what kind of TV programs to watch	Has rules about how much TV child can watch	Encourages child to watch certain programs
Total Sample of Children	58%	44%	57%
By Age of Child			
6- 8	72	57	66
9-11	69	50	60
12-14	54	40	54
15-17	29	24	42
By Mother's Education			
Less than HS Graduate	51	41	40
HS Graduate	62	45	59
Some College, plus	59	45	73
By Family Income			
Less than $10,000	50	44	42
$10,000 - 19,999	63	47	57
$20,000 plus	64	42	71
By Race			
White	61	43	61
Non-white	47	47	43
By Daily Household TV Use			
Heavy (set on 9 hours+)	52	35	48
Moderate (set on 5-8 hours)	61	45	58
Light (set on 4 hours-)	59	49	62

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1) The data reported here are based on mothers' responses about each of the children selected for interview.

sharpest breaks in parental controls occur at about the age children enter senior high school. At any age parents are almost equally likely to set rules for both sons and daughters.

The use of these two tactics to control a child's television exposure is also related to a family's class position. The children of better-educated or more affluent parents are more likely to confront rules about TV-viewing and much more likely to get suggestions that they watch certain types of programs. The higher the class position, as indicated by mother's education or by family income, the more the balance shifts toward positive encouragement. Thus, families differ not only in the extent to which they seek to control TV use by children but also in the style with which they go about doing so. Such differences are also apparent in homes making heavier or lighter use of television. The less they watch TV themselves, the more likely parents are to try to guide as well as limit their children's use of TV.

Radio Listening in the Family

To round out our coverage of family use of the mass media, we asked each mother a few questions about household and children's use of the radio. The general consistency of responses, in which only insignificant variations were found in overall use or programs heard, permits us to summarize the results briefly.

Radios are present in almost all (99%) of the homes. On the average weekday, a radio set is on for 3-1/3 hours in the home, slightly less in homes with 6-8 year olds and increasingly (but not much) more in the homes of progressively older children. No differences of any consequence were found in the homes of families with different social backgrounds.

Mothers' own reported radio listening at home or in the car was equally consistent, averaging just under 2-1/2 hours across almost all groups. Depending upon the specific question asked, between 5 and 12 percent claimed not to listen to the radio at all. Housewives, not surprisingly, listened to the radio about one-half hour longer (163 vs. 129 minutes) than full-time working mothers. But mothers in "heavy TV" homes listened as much as those in "light TV" homes, and no marked differences were found among mothers in homes into which a daily newspaper came regularly or less often. It is evident from this that radio has found its own niche in the schedules of these women, and coexists comfortably with the other media. From the data on exposure to both radio and TV it can also be inferred that one or another of the broadcast media is on almost constantly in the home.

Asked what kinds of radio programs they usually listen to, the mothers spontaneously mentioned the following: music (by 82%), news (by 32%), weather (by 16%), and talk shows (by 11%). No noteworthy differences were observed in the patterns of response of mothers in various groups or categories. Radio listening seems to fit easily into their daily round of activities.

Mothers were usually aware of their children's radio listening, and here some differences emerged in the perceived use of the radio by children of differing ages. Among 6-8 year olds, 59 percent were said to listen to the radio, a proportion that grew to 92 percent of those age 15-17. Overall, 77 percent of the children were radio listeners, according to their mothers.

Finally, each child's mother was asked how she felt about the child listening to the radio. In almost all cases, the attitude was either one of approval (81%)[1] or indifference (14%), a near-unanimity that did not vary with the child's family background. Only a bare 2 percent of the children had mothers who expressed any disapproval. Clearly, a child's use of the radio in the home creates little cause for family controversy.

Magazines and Books in the Family

The inclusion of books and magazines with newspapers, radio and television under the category of "mass communications media" is arguable. They are not produced daily for immediate consumption, nor is any published in quantities that rival daily newspapers, nor are their contents made freely available in the home as are TV and radio broadcasts. Yet the audience of consumers of books and magazines is very substantial, and they are obviously important sources of

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1) The mothers of 14 percent of the children "strongly approve" of them listening to the radio. The comparable proportion for mothers' attitudes toward their children's newspaper reading was 33%, and their TV watching 8%.

information and entertainment to which children can be exposed in the home. Moreover, they can compete with newspapers and the broadcast media for time and attention or, conversely, be displaced by the latter. It is appropriate, therefore, that their place in children's homes be studied, especially as a potential influence on children's orientations to print media. Findings on their prevalence in the home may shed light on the often-stated claim that the newspaper reading of today's generation of children is affected adversely by a general disaffection with things in print, felt by parents as well as children.

As with the analysis of other media, our initial assumption is that their availability in the home and parents' attitudes about magazines and books can serve to foster or impede the development of children's interest in them. Here we will deal with the "supply side" of this assumption by reviewing data on household availabilities and parental reading patterns and attitudes.

One or more magazines is brought into 72 percent of children's homes. The prevalence of magazines in the home is significantly related to the social class position of the families, but does not vary with the ages of their children. Fewer than one-half of families least favorably situated (minority, low income, low education) took any magazines on a regular basis. Book-purchasing or borrowing by parents was equally strongly correlated with social class position. Annual book-buying or borrowing estimates were two to three times greater for higher-status families than for those in the lowest status categories. The frequency of book reading by mothers and fathers broke sharply along the same class lines; mothers generally read books more often than the children's fathers (see table 14).

One additional set of findings shows the influential role played by social class on parents' orientations to or use of all print media. The household availability of newspapers in the home on a regular or less frequent basis, itself closely related to parents' income and education, is in turn correlated with the presence of magazines and books in the home and with parents' book reading. Children growing up in socially deprived families, therefore, are much less likely to come into contact with any of the print media on a regular basis, or have the example put before them of their parents' reliance upon the printed word.

Parents' Attitudes About the Print Media for Children

Do mothers' attitudes about children's book and magazine reading vary with their own use of these two print media? Or is there a widely-prevalent attitude among mothers that reading is good for children, a viewpoint that is essentially unrelated to their own reading behavior? The truth lies closer to the latter alternative.

Endorsements of books and magazines as reading matter for the children were nearly unanimous and often warmly expressed. Ninety-four percent of the children had mothers who approved of their reading of books; 57 percent found "strong approval". (Only three children had mothers who disapproved in any way.) Attitudes about magazine reading were almost equally positively slanted; it was

Table 14

Availability of Magazines and Involvement with Books in Children's Families

	Magazine(s) Taken Regularly	Average Annual No. Books Bought or Borrowed	Mother Ever Reads a Book	Father[1] Ever Reads a Book
Total Sample of Families	72%	21	68%	54%
By Mother's Education				
Less than HS Graduate	48	13	47	42
HS Graduate	77	20	69	52
Some College, plus	92	30	89	72
By Family Income				
Less than $10,000	46	12	51	34
$10,000 - 19,999	78	22	69	54
$20,000 plus	91	30	81	67
By Race				
White	79	24	73	58
Non-white	47	7	47	41
By Weekly Newspaper Availability				
Available all 5 weekdays	80	22	72	59
Available some weekdays	58	18	61	43
Available no (0) weekdays	39	14	32	20

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1) Based on mothers' reports in families with a male household head present.

approved of as an activity by the mothers of 87 percent of the children (28% "strongly"). Mothers from different family backgrounds varied only in the warmth of their endorsements, not in their generally approving stance toward reading.[1]

Mothers also seem to be aware of the extent to which children are reading books and magazines, and try to exercise some influence over the content of their children's reading matter. Two-thirds of the children were said to be magazine readers and four out of five readers of books other than for school. Younger children read books appreciably more often and magazines less often than teenagers, according to their mothers. Family background affected children's perceived use of both print media in familiar ways: the higher the family's social position the more often was the child seen to be a reader (see table 15).

Attempts to regulate what children read in the home were fairly uniform across all families. Rules were said to exist for about three out of five children up to the age of 14; after that, parental vigilance drops off. Families in the lowest and highest categories of income and education less often had rules, probably for somewhat different reasons -- lower-status children read less, while active regulation by higher-status parents might be seen to conflict with their strong approval of reading or their generally more permissive child-rearing values.

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1) The three print media -- books, newspapers and magazines -- were the ones that mothers approved of most strongly of all the media about which they were asked.

Table 15

Mothers' Awareness of and Control Over Their Children's Reading

	Proportion who say:		
	Child Reads Magazines	Child Reads Non School Books	Family Has Rules About What Child Brings Home to Read
Total Sample of Children	67%	79%	57%
By Age of Child			
6- 8	52	85	61
9-11	65	85	62
12-14	75	76	60
15-17	79	70	43
By Mother's Education			
Less than HS Graduate	58	70	55
HS Graduate	68	81	63
Some College, plus	74	87	49
By Family Income			
Less than $10,000	57	69	53
$10,000 - $19,999	67	80	63
$20,000 plus	74	87	56
By Race			
White	70	83	58
Non-white	54	66	53

Control or encouragement of children's reading habits can take other forms than by the example set by parents or by rulemaking. Reading can also be promoted by buying children books and by reading to them when they are young. In the past year, 53 percent of the children got books as a gift from their parents, a proportion that declines sharply with the children's ages and that climbs equally steeply as one ascends the social ladder. When younger, eight out of nine children had books read to them by their parents, a form of encouragement that was less common only among children in the lowest status categories (see table 16).

To summarize, these findings reflect the fact that the family climate surrounding most children's reading of books and magazines is strongly supportive. Reading is a highly valued activity even in homes where parents themselves do less of it. Mothers are aware of their children's reading habits, and, in a majority of cases, concerned enough about what they are reading to try to regulate their children's home reading fare. The majority of parents actively seek to encourage their children's reading, especially in the early years, by giving them books and reading to them. The principal differences observed stem from the contrasting economic resources and lifestyles associated with a family's social position, which condition the availability of reading matter in the home and the parents' own use of the print media.

Table 15

Parents' Encouragement of Children's Book Reading

	Proportion who say:	
	Bought Books as a Gift for Their Child	Read Books to Child When Younger
Total Sample of Children	53%	88%
By Age of Child		
6- 8	71	90
9-11	59	88
12-14	42	85
15-17	31	87
By Mother's Education		
Less than HS Graduate	35	77
HS Graduate	57	91
Some College, plus	64	93
By Family Income		
Less than $10,000	35	74
$10,000 - 19,999	57	92
$20,000 plus	64	93
By Race		
White	57	92
Non-white	35	70

CONTACT WITH THE WIDER WORLD: THE PLACE OF NEWS

Our analysis has been focused so far on the narrow confines of home and family. Information provided by mothers has been used to examine the prominence of the mass media in the household, the attention paid to them by parents, and the attitudinal climate that envelops a child's own media use. The actual substance carried into the home by the various media has been touched on only fleetingly, chiefly in our analysis of mothers' newspaper reading.

In this final section of our report, we will single out news as one type of information conveyed by the mass media. The place of news in the home deserves special treatment in a study of children's media behavior for several reasons. First, media news forms a crucial part of the total flow of experiences, words and images out of which a child's social and political awareness is built. Second, the family performs a powerful gatekeeping role, especially for younger children, in controlling this flow and providing the child with a framework for interpretation. Events that are novel or incomprehensible, seen from the child's naive perspective, are often given meaning by a parent's casual or pointed reactions conveyed to the child through gestures or comments. Thus, the volume of news entering the home via the media has important implications for the child's mental and social development, especially for the growth of his fund of knowledge and attitudes about the wider world outside the family.

The extent to which news is carried into the home and made available to children via newspapers was fully detailed in our earlier analysis.[1] Only a few summary points need to be recalled in this context. Over six out of ten homes take a paper every weekday and Sunday; nine out of ten take the paper at least occasionally. The vast majority of parents are regular or occasional readers; readership is more extensive the higher the family's socioeconomic status. Hard news items, those dealing with local, national, and foreign news, were first, second, and fifth-ranked by mothers out of a list of 19 types of newspaper editorial content read most often. And, seven out of ten children have things in the newspaper brought to their attention by their mothers. To be sure, not all of these items had to be news stories. But, given the mothers' manifest interest in news it is reasonable to assume that at least some had the capacity to widen the children's mental horizons.

As these findings attest, the contribution made by newspapers to the daily flow of news into the home is substantial. The last-noted finding further suggests that an information chain linking news in newspapers directly to children through their parents' mediating actions exists in a majority of families.[2]

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1) See above, pp. 14-31 and tables 4-9.

2) The success achieved by parents' efforts to excite their children's interest in the newspaper, and the effects of children's own readership of newspapers on their political socialization are discussed in Children and Newspapers (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980), another report in this series.

The perceived value of the newspaper as a source of news for children is also apparent in mothers' attitudes toward the use of newspapers in their children's classrooms. The idea was favored by the mothers of 82 percent of the children, and the two specific contributions most often cited were: as a source of news on current events (by 41%) and as a source of news on world or international events (by 25%). If children fail to make better use of the newspaper as a news source, in most cases it is not for lack of maternal approval.

Another important contributor to the flow of news into the home is television. A full assessment of that contribution is not possible to make with the data at hand from this survey,[1] which are based on mothers' answers to a question about 19 types of TV programs that they "usually watch". But, despite their limitations, the data show news to be highly valued as a type of TV program content. "Local news" was usually watched by 70 percent, network news by 47 percent, and "documentaries or news specials" by 34 percent. These three news-related program types placed first, fourth and ninth in frequency of mention out of the list of TV program types -- a strong showing in relation to the entertainment fare that is usually identified as having the greatest popular appeal.

As noted earlier, in the analysis devoted to household use of TV, 57 percent of children received some specific suggestions from

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1) For other findings on adult TV news-viewing based on a 1977 nationwide sample of over 3,000 households, see The Daily Diet of News (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1978).

their mothers about what they should watch. "Documentaries" and "news" were the only news-related items specifically suggested with any frequency, and both were clearly secondary to "educational" programming, "children's specials or shows", and "nature" programs as the kinds of programs mothers wanted their children to watch. Underlying almost all of these scattered suggestions, however, is a clear preference for shows that inform the mind of the child.

News enters the homes by radio as well: without prompting, only 32 percent of the mothers freely mentioned radio news as one of the types of programs they usually listen to, but when specifically probed by a follow-up question, the proportion who usually listen to news climbed to 78 percent. This proportion hardly varied among mothers from different family backgrounds. These few data provide only vague indications of the reliance on radio for news in the average home. Findings from other surveys show its contribution to be substantial, especially as an initial source of news about major stories and in its coverage of fast-breaking news stories.[1]

News also comes into the home between the covers of magazines, especially newsweeklies. Almost three-quarters (72%) of homes took at least one magazine on a regular basis. Among those recalled by name on an unaided basis, the newsweeklies came into 20 percent of homes taking any magazines, a proportion that held constant across the homes of children in all age groups. The major newsweeklies

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1) See The Daily Diet of News (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1978).

were more often an ingredient of the generally richer diet of news media consumed by higher status families than by the media-poorer families lower on the social ladder.

What's in the News: Family Conversations

The news that the media make plentifully available provides boundless topics for family conversation. We asked both mothers and children about ten categories of news stories. Mothers were asked how often each came up as a topic of conversation in the family; children were asked how interested they were in each topic. Our concern here is with the former: the place of these news topics as grist for the family conversational mill.

The topics were deliberately selected to represent major categories of news stories that receive constant media coverage -- inflation, unemployment, crime, local and national government, international events, etc. These topics, as many studies have shown, also form the agenda of greatest concern to public opinion, a concern that is largely shaped by their prominence in the mass media.[1] What is their place as topics discussed within the intimate confines of the family, rather than as issues of potential concern to the mass public?

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[1] 1) On this point, see Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, "The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media", Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 36 (1972), pp. 176-87; G. Ray Funkhouser, "The Issues of the Sixties: An Exploratory Study in the Dynamics of Public Opinion", Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 37 (1973), pp. 62-75.

The ten topics, phrased to emphasize their substance rather than their status as issues, broke down into three fairly distinct groupings (see table 17). The number one topic in most families was the rising cost of living. Fairly close to the problem of inflation as a focal point for frequent family conversation was news about the schools. These two stood somewhat apart in their evident importance from three others that formed a second cluster of interests: neighborhood happenings, youthful drug use, and news about crimes and robberies.

Table 17

News as Topics of Family Conversation[1]
(In Percentages)

	Proportion Saying Topic Discussed:		
Topic	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely/Never
The rising cost of living	81	14	5
What's happening in the schools	68	26	6
Things that happen in your neighborhood	53	33	14
Young people using drugs	48	37	15
Crimes and robberies	45	41	14
What your local government is doing	28	44	28
Unemployment	26	39	35
What President Carter is doing	23	44	33
Pollution problems	20	43	37
What's going on in other countries	18	46	36

---

1) Based on mothers' reports about each of the ten news topics.

The interpretative thread that binds these topics together and perhaps explains why they crop up so much more often in family conversations than the remaining five is that each of them is intimately linked with the welfare or community standing of the family unit. Three of them -- inflation, drug use, and crime -- pose direct and obvious threats to the family through the victimization of its members. The other two deal with social structures -- school and neighborhood -- that link families together into a community. (Had we asked about a third -- the church -- it might have joined these two as a conversational topic of equally lively interest.)

From this perspective, the remaining topics -- local government, unemployment, presidential actions, pollution and foreign events -- seem matters of much more distant concern to families. Any of these could of course rapidly become a topic of greater urgency rivaling those talked about more often, if they visibly began to affect a family member or the entire family. But, despite the outpouring of news on all these topics, conveyed daily by most of the news media into every home, the family agenda does not simply reflect the cumulative news story priorities of the day. Rather what is talked about within the family most often are those things that in some way or other seem to stimulate family members' collective interests.

By comparing the frequency with which these topics are discussed in selected types of families, we can find further clues as to how this process works (see table 18). Families with college-trained mothers -- generally more affluent and socially concerned -- typically talk more often about almost all of these newsworthy topics than do other families. The three exceptions, each presumably reflecting a lesser degree of experience with it as a problem, are youthful drug use, crime and unemployment.

Table 18

Family Conversations: News Frequently Discussed in Selected Types of Families

(In Percentages)

	Mothers Report Frequent Discussion:				
	All Families	Families w/College-Trained Mothers	Families w/income Under $10,000	Non-White Families	Single Parent Families
(N) =	(817)	(211)	(209)	(157)	(162)
The rising cost of living	81%	82%	77%	73%	74%
What's happening in the schools	68	77	57	61	70
Things that happen in your neighborhood	53	56	53	55	44
Young people using drugs	48	41	51	46	49
Crimes and robberies	45	39	55	65	53
What your local government is doing	28	38	15	20	16
Unemployment	26	22	43	50	40
What President Carter is doing	23	37	17	17	14
Pollution problems	20	28	18	19	17
What's going on in other countries	18	28	17	24	17

Compared with all families, and especially with those just discussed, families that are worst off economically, minority families, and those with only one parent in the house -- categories that substantially overlap with one another -- present a different mix of family concerns. Inflation and schools also head the list for these families. But conversations in all three types of households dwell much more often on unemployment and crime, issues that frequently afflict them personally. Local government affairs are even more often a neglected topic, perhaps because these groups feel unable to do much about them. (Low income and minority families also talk about schools slightly less often, perhaps for the same reason.)

It is reasonable to infer from these data that family values and needs, as interpreted by parents, act as strong organizing principles in processing the news that comes into the home. This process works in several ways: first by the choice of media entering the home (primarily in the case of the print media); then by the way in which parents selectively attend to the news; and finally by the highlighting given certain news topics through conversation in the family. The end result is an agenda of concerns taken from the media and elsewhere and molded to fit each family's unique constellation of interests.

Steady Work: A Concluding Note

We have seen that the mass media are extensively available in the homes of children, that they occupy substantial amounts of their parents' time, and that they are seen in varying degrees as sources of both helpful and harmful influences on the children's development. Parents generally approve of the media for their children, but a majority makes some efforts to control their intake, especially that of younger children.

Thus, the family exerts an active force in shaping the relationships created between children and the media in most homes. Even older children, for whom rules about media use are much less prevalent, still receive a good deal of parental guidance about their use of the mass media. Moreover, although obscured by the one-time measures used in this survey, parental influence can be presumed to be cumulative as well as continuous during the growing years of the child.

The powerful mediating role that parents play -- by their example, actions and attitudes -- must be kept at the forefront of attention in promoting newspaper use by children. The most effective conditions fostering that use are homes in which the paper is regularly available[1] and is heavily relied upon and regularly read by the adults in the family. In this sense, the steady, day-by-day work of keeping the newspaper relevant for its current audience of adult readers has long-term implications for the generation growing up in their homes.

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1) Another Readership Project study that surveyed 1,048 children in Richmond, Virginia concluded that "the most important predictor of newspaper reading among students is the availability of newspapers in the home." See John B. Mauro, "Newspaper Readership Among Public School Children Grades 7-12", ANPA News Research Report No. 23 (October 31, 1979).

The editorial challenge is clear-cut: daily newspapers can help secure their hold on future readers not simply by increasing their appeal to children, but also and more fundamentally by enhancing the role that the paper plays in their parents' lives.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The following tables are provided for readers interested in obtaining a quick estimate of the stability of a given percentage or of the significance of the difference between two percentages.

Confidence Intervals for a Given Percentage
(at the 95% confidence level)

N (Base for %)	Reported Percentage 10 or 90%	20 or 80%	30 or 70%	40 or 60%	50%
500	2.6	3.5	4.0	4.3	4.4
250	3.7	5.0	5.7	6.1	6.2
200	4.2	5.5	6.3	6.8	6.9
150	4.8	6.4	7.3	7.8	8.0
100	5.9	7.8	9.0	9.6	9.8
50	8.3	11.1	12.7	13.6	13.9
25	11.8	15.7	18.0	19.2	19.6

Example: If a report shows that 20% of all sampled respondents (when N = 500) answer in a particular way, the chances are about 95 out of 100 that the true value lies within ±3.5% of that value, that is, that the range 16.5% - 23.5% contains the true value in the population.

Significance of Differences Between Percentages
(95% confidence level)

Average of the Bases of Percentages Being Compared	Average of Reported Percentages 10 or 90%	20 or 30%	30 or 70%	40 or 60%	50%
500	3.7	4.9	5.7	6.1	6.2
250	5.2	7.1	8.1	8.6	8.8
200	5.9	7.8	8.9	9.6	9.8
150	6.8	9.1	10.3	11.0	11.3
100	8.3	11.0	12.7	13.6	13.9
50	11.7	15.7	18.0	19.2	19.7
25	16.7	22.2	25.5	27.2	27.7

Example: A report shows that 33% of all respondents 30 to 39 years of age use a certain product and that only 27% of all respondents in the 40-to-49 age group use that product. Could this difference be due to chance?

> In this example assume a base of 500 for both age groups. The average of the percentages (33 + 27) equals 30% and the difference between the percentages is 6%. Since 6% is greater than 5.7% (the figure in the table for this base and percentage) the chances are about 95 out of 100 that the product is used significantly more by the 30-39 age group.

The table values are based on an assumption of simple random sampling. The figures may be too large if a stratified sampling technique was used and probably are too small if a cluster sampling technique was utilized. (For formulas used, see Q. McNemar, Psychological Statistics, pages 54, 60.) The second table should be used with extreme caution if the bases being averaged are very different in size.

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CHILDREN & NEWSPAPERS

Changing Patterns of Readership and Their Effects

Report on the Study of
AMERICA'S CHILDREN
AND THE MASS MEDIA

March 1980
NEWSPAPER
READERSHIP PROJECT

Newspaper Advertising Bureau Inc., 485 Lexington Ave., New York, New York 10017 NRP:80-02

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MASS MEDIA IN THE FAMILY SETTING:

Social Patterns in Media Availability and Use by Parents

Report on a Study of

AMERICA'S CHILDREN AND THE MASS MEDIA

March 1980

NEWSPAPER READERSHIP PROJECT

This study is one of a series of research studies conducted under the auspices of the Newspaper Readership Project, an industry-wide effort to promote circulation and readership.

AMERICA'S CHILDREN AND THE MASS MEDIA

PREFACE

In June 1978, the Newspaper Advertising Bureau conducted a nationwide study of how children and adolescents use and feel about the media -- TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, movies, comic books, and books. Personal interviews were conducted by the Child Research Service Inc.-Center for Family Research in a probability sample of 817 households with 1,156 children and with their mothers. The children interviewed in these households constitute a nationally representative sample of 6 to 17 year-olds in American homes.

The detailed findings of this survey are presented in a series of reports analyzing the family settings in which the children are being raised and their parents' media habits and attitudes; the children's use of newspapers; their media world; and their newspaper use in America's classrooms. A separate technical report describes the sampling plan, questionnaires, and field work procedures employed for this survey. Earlier NAB publications based on findings from the study include a booklet, Children, Mothers and Newspapers, that provided an initial overview of major findings, and a report, Children, Movie-Going and the Newspaper, that analyzes the film preferences and habits of the children.

Responsibility for the study design, analysis and report-writing was shared equally by Albert E. Gollin and Thelma Anderson of NAB's Research Department.

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HIGHLIGHTS

A nationwide sample of 1,156 children drawn from households containing any children ages 6 to 17 was interviewed about the uses of newspapers and other mass media. Data for this report came primarily from the children and are concerned with their media habits, especially with changes in their newspaper reading. Here are the principal findings:

1. Newspapers are first and foremost a part of the child's home environment. The daily or Sunday paper comes into the home of over nine out of ten (91%) of the children on a regular or occasional basis. Over 60 percent had one available every day of the week. But families varied appreciably in the frequency with which they made a paper available: single-parent, low income or minority families took a paper much less often.

2. Accessibility was greater the older the child, and the more favored the family background. Parental readership followed the same pattern: the younger the child and the less favorably situated he or she was in social class terms, the less likely was it that a newspaper was present or that parents were reading one. Thus, economic and social disadvantages have a pervasive impact on children's access to a daily paper and on their reading habits.

3. Newspapers are shadowy social institutions to most children. Few have ever visited a plant, or can recall reading or seeing anything about how a paper is put out.

4. Images of newspaper content are blurred among the very young, but become better defined among teenagers. With advancing age, children are able to name more parts of the paper, and those who read one regularly do much better than those who don't. Comics and sports are the two parts that are most vivid in children's minds, with general news and classified ads (for jobs or autos) joining these two in the recall of older children.

5. Parents highly approve of their children reading newspapers, and those with teenagers are warmer in their endorsements than those with younger ones. By comparison, watching TV is approved less warmly for children at any age. Parents who don't take a daily paper at all are only slightly less approving than those who read one regularly, attesting to the generally high value attached to newspapers as an information source for children.

6. Children don't find newspaper reading very entertaining, compared with other media activities, but ratings of it as a source of enjoyment rise steadily with advancing age. The newspaper is more highly valued for what it tells children about, and these ratings rise higher among older children. Reading skills (or the lack of such abilities) play a role in children's muted enthusiasm for newspaper reading, as does the experience of having one available daily. The more familiar it is around the house, the better it is liked.

7. General problems with reading sizably affect the readership of newspapers among the very youngest, 53 percent of whom say they have a lot of difficulty reading one. But by the onset of the teen years the vast majority of children say they can read a paper with no difficulty. And again, the daily presence of the newspaper makes it more comprehensible to children at every age after the age of 9.

8. Reading habits develop slowly at first, paced by the acquisition of basic reading skills. But by the age of 9, over three out of five children are reading a newspaper at least once in a while, and about half of those age 15 to 17 read one every day or most days. The growth of the regular reading habit is fairly continuous throughout the childhood years, with a dip around the time children enter senior high school, after which readership rises close to the levels shown by young adults.

9. As with other measures of reading, the time spent with a paper rises with age and is appreciably higher at every age among children who have greater daily access to one. Newspaper readership goes hand in hand with the reading of other print media, beginning in the earliest years.

10. Availability powerfully affects newspaper readership at every age, and the difference in reading between those with regular access and others grows steadily greater as children mature. By the age of 15 to 17, only one child in ten without a paper at home regularly has become a frequent reader of newspapers.

11. Thus, opportunity and parental models play powerful roles in shaping children's newspaper reading in the earliest years of childhood. These home influences become progressively more important as children mature. To foster the development of children's readership of newspapers, it is imperative that their parents' own reading habits be placed at the center of attention.

12. Children's TV watching does not affect their reading of newspapers. At every age, those who watch more shows daily do not differ in their readership from those who watch TV less often.

13. The Sunday newspaper is more often read by children than the daily paper, and the main reason is the comics, especially for the youngest. It is so popular that almost one-third (31%) of children in families that don't get a Sunday paper nevertheless manage to read one. Children spend more (38%) time with the Sunday paper, on the average, than with the daily paper. The difference among the youngest is even greater, and it is the appeal of the comics that accounts for the major share of the difference.

14. Reading of comics, front page news, and movie listings grows in frequency with age for both boys and girls. They also share a growing interest in TV items, local news, and news about music and records, although the growth of readership of these parts is less dramatic. But apart from these five, boys and girls go their separate ways in their steady reading habits. For boys, sports and national news become more appealing, while for girls, horoscopes, fashion items, personal advice and celebrity gossip take on greater appeal as they grow older. This segmenting of interests needs to be kept in mind in planning new sections designed to appeal to children.

15. As with adults, the differences in readership of various parts of the paper are not great between frequent and occasional newspaper readers. The main factors affecting readership are the age and sex of the child. When asked to name what they would like to see more of in the paper, children generally mentioned what they now read most often: comics and sports. But there was some interest expressed in having more teenage-related content, which relatively few papers now carry on a regular basis.

16. Exposure to news grows steadily with age through all the media, especially in the case of news in the newspaper. By late adolescence, 50 percent or more are regular or occasional readers of the front page, local news, national news and international news, as the world outside assumes greater relevance for them.

17. Children who read newspapers frequently are equally or more likely than nonreaders to be doing other things in daily life: talking on the phone with friends, playing sports, engaging in hobbies, socializing, etc. They are more likely to be readers of books and magazines, suggesting that it is the reading habit in general that conditions the appeals of the paper to children, in addition to the other factors noted earlier.

18. The effects of newspaper reading on children's citizenship education are profound. Correct identification of six public figures and issues is generally quite low until adolescence. But at every age, newspaper-reading children do much better than those who read one less often or not at all. Only age, and the cumulative effects of schooling that is reflected in the transition from childhood to adolescence, plays a more significant role in the level of children's political awareness than does their readership of a daily paper.

19. Children's beliefs or knowledge about five rights and restraints that are central to our constitutional system reflect disheartening levels of uncertainty or ignorance. But attitudes and beliefs become more affirmative with advancing age, and again the newspaper plays a significant independent role in the scores that the children achieved.

20. Only 43 percent of the children believe that the press should be free to criticize an important government official. But this proportion rises significantly with age; more importantly, support for a free press is consistently stronger at every age among children who read a paper regularly than for others. Thus, successful efforts to promote children's newspaper reading carry the added bonus of building support for a free press among the future generation of citizens.

21. Children's interests in ten news topics broadened and deepened with maturity, and again the reading of a daily paper significantly enhanced this process. Interests in matters of more immediate concern to children--neighborhood, schools, crimes and youthful drug use--were consistently greater than interests in adult concerns. Presidential actions and foreign news rarely were matters of concern even for the oldest children.

22. Based on these measures of childhood political socialization, the newspaper emerges as a significant educational force shaping children's knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about our political system and the events and issues that are staples of the daily diet of news.

23. Newspapers are increasingly experimenting with new sections and pages that will have special appeal to children. The detailed findings of this study provide a useful guide to the progressive growth and segmentation of interests among boys and girls throughout childhood and adolescence. Hard news becomes more interesting as children mature; it is also one of the major benefits of newspaper reading that parents want their children to have, and a prime reason why they approve of and encourage their children to read one. The strategic roles played by parents and the schools need to be kept at the forefront of plans and decisions about actions newspapers can take to enhance children's newspaper reading. Turning parents into regular readers not only expands today's newspaper audience, it also offers long-term benefits in securing the loyalties of future audiences.

INTRODUCTION

At first glance, reading a newspaper would seem to be an easy thing to do. But not for children, especially those in the pre-school years. Reading skills develop slowly, as do interests in things not immediately connected with the world of childhood. And even when a youngster acquires basic reading skills, the newspaper does not have instant appeal for the younger child. Its content is designed largely for adult readers, and unlike television it is not primarily an entertainment medium. Small wonder, then, that newspaper reading habits develop only slowly for children -- a fact established by casual observation as well as by some earlier studies of children's media habits.

But little is known about how interest in the newspaper evolves among children across the entire span of years of childhood and adolescence, how it is related to their other interests and media habits, and how family and school influence children's changing media attitudes and behavior. These are the main issues addressed by this study. In this report findings are presented that deal with the following specific questions:

What images of the newspaper do children have? How much do they know about its editorial content?

How do they feel about reading newspapers, compared with use of other mass media?

What are their newspaper reading habits? How often do they read one; what do they usually read or look at; how does reading fit in with other activities children enjoy doing?

When do children become interested in "hard" news? What relationship is there between their newspaper reading and the growth of political awareness?

Because age is an important determinant of children's evolving interests and habits, particularly in the case of newspaper reading, we will present detailed findings on these and related topics for children in each of four age groups: ages 6 to 8 (who are mainly in grades 1-3); ages 9 to 11 (in grades 4-6); ages 12 to 14 (in grades 7-9); and ages 15 to 17 (in grades 10-12). In this manner, we can trace the development of newspaper reading habits and attitudes for children across the school years.[1]

At all ages, and especially in the early formative years, access to the newspaper in the home can powerfully affect the children's own perspectives on newspaper reading in two ways. First, availability obviously affects the likelihood that children will develop a detailed awareness of what a newspaper has to offer. And secondly, the daily presence of a paper and its use by their parents can influence children's perceptions of desirable adult behavior as well as their attitudes toward the news and features in the newspaper that their parents discuss in the family -- as frequently happens. Both directly and indirectly, therefore, the factors affecting availability can be expected to play a role in shaping children's attitudes toward newspaper reading and the development of reading habits. For this reason, many of the findings in this report show the combined effects of age and availability on children's orientations to the newspaper.

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1) This cross-section survey yields a series of snapshots of children at various age levels that offer inferential evidence of the processes underlying the observed changes. A longitudinal study, which follows a group of children beginning at age 6 over a period of years, would be needed to provide more direct evidence.

Sampling Children and Their Families

The data reported here came primarily from interviews with a random sample of children age 6 to 17 living in a nationally representative sample of 817 households; in all, 1,156 children were selected for interviewing. Interviews were conducted at 70 locations in thirty states, following a sampling plan that gave appropriate weight to region, population size, and household distribution in urban, suburban and rural areas.[1] No more than two children per eligible household were interviewed; all households initially contacted that had one or more children age 6-17 were defined as eligible for inclusion in the survey. Nationally, 54% of families contained one or more children under age 18; of these, 56% had one or more age 6 to 17, according to recent U.S. Government statistics. Thus, our data come from a representative sample of children in a segment of American families, those deemed eligible, rather than from the cross-section samples of all American households that are typically employed in national studies of adult media audiences.

Interviews in eligible households were first sought with the mother or other principal child-caring adult, and then separately with her child or children. Great care was taken by specially trained interviewers from the Center for Family Research to ensure both privacy and frankness in the interview and comprehension by even the youngest

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1) A full description of the sampling plan and field work is contained in the technical report of the Child Research Service, Inc.-Center for Family Research, which is part of this series of NAB reports on the study.

children of the meaning of the questions. Many visual aids were specially devised to add greater clarity to the questions and response categories. Information used to characterize family background or household media use in this report came from the interviews with the children's mothers.

The answers given by each child were weighted to take account of the probability of their being selected for interviewing in households where more than one eligible child was present. As a result, the application of sampling weights to children in each of four age groups yielded a total weighted sample size of 1,517 children. This figure is referred to as the "weighted base" for percentaging in the tables accompanying this report.

Interviewing Children: The Problem of Interpretation

In studying children one must always be wary of a number of special pitfalls that pose greater problems than in research with adults. Perhaps the most important one is their limited or variable understanding of survey-type questions or response categories that require them to express themselves by making refined qualitative distinctions. This is particularly applicable to younger children, whose ability to absorb the meaning of a question and reply in words or categories not of their own choosing can be severely tested by a structured interview -- an experience that is in any case novel for most of them, despite their familiarity with quizzes and tests. We tried to overcome this problem by carefully phrasing questions and responses so that they were easy to understand, by extensively pretesting the interview schedule, and by providing the children with a variety of specially-designed prompts and visual aids that made the experience less formidable and created an accessible frame of reference for their replies.

A related issue in research with children might be termed the "Procrustean bed" problem: using adult categories to describe behavior or assess attitudes that are ill-suited when seen from the perspectives of children and adolescents. One way of dealing with this, in addition to the solutions to the first-mentioned problem, is to recognize that questions asked of children have to be very concrete in meaning and simply phrased, and that the burden of responding to structured questions be minimized by avoiding response categories that are too-finely nuanced or outside of children's experiences. In a few cases, we varied the wording of responses to make it easier for those under the age of 12 to choose one, and the interviewers were enjoined to accept uncertainty rather than press for answers to questions that a child seemed unable or unwilling to entertain. And we minimized the burden by designing the interview to last an average of one-half hour.

Then there is the problem of evasiveness or fear of embarrassment. This was less of a problem here, because the questioning did not dwell on touchy areas or seek to probe deeply into a child's beliefs or sentiments. Where questions had the potential of assuming a threatening character, as with a series that tested their knowledge of current events and civil rights, we carefully introduced them with reassuring disclaimers such as "If you don't know about them, that's OK."

One indicator of success in steering past these shoals is that at the end of the interview 90 percent of the children in each age group agreed with the statement, "I liked this interview." Another is that interviewers' ratings of the ease or difficulty each child showed in being interviewed yielded a reassuringly low proportion who seemed to have a lot of difficulty. Only 9 percent of all children were so rated, and of these, eight out of nine were under the age of 12. But only 23 percent of all 6 to 8 year olds showed significant problems, although another 52 percent of this group ran into occasional difficulties with questions during the interview. Among older children, problems were less frequently observed. By the age of 12 or older, more than four children in five were rated as having had no difficulty at all in answering questions.

In the end, the evaluation of this survey's findings will depend upon judgments about how appropriate each question or set of questions on a given topic can be presumed to be, taking into account the above-mentioned limitations and interview procedures. Two types of internal evidence are available for such an assessment. One is the precise wording of the questions; in most cases we have included both questions and response categories as part of the tabular presentation of data. The second kind of evidence is provided by the patterning of the findings themselves: their consistency and their interpretability in light of available knowledge about children's attitudes and behavior.

In a few instances, one suspects that what the children told us involved a mingling of fact and wishes or preferences. This is likely to have been true, for example, of their claims that their parents do or don't try to regulate their media use. Questions such as these deal with elusive issues and the answers are subject to a considerable amount of individuality in children's definitions of what their parents do in this regard. But in most cases the questions and responses were fairly straightforward in nature and pose fewer problems of meaning or interpretation.

The consistency of findings about a given topic can best be seen by comparing the results obtained by differently-worded questions that probe the same area. For example, findings about children's reading of newspapers, which was measured in a variety of ways, nevertheless showed closely similar patterns of variation with their ages and family background measures. Interpreting such findings, therefore, involves matters of degree or emphasis, rather than more basic questions about the accuracy of measurement.

CHILDHOOD EXPOSURE TO NEWSPAPERS

Access to Newspapers

In adult newspaper readership studies, it is assumed that if an adult is motivated to read a newspaper he or she will acquire that newspaper, either by home delivery or by purchasing a copy. But in examining newspaper readership among children, we must first deal with one basic prerequisite: is there a newspaper available in the home? To be sure, children could buy newspapers on their own, but they are not expected to exercise such initiative, especially when the cost of newspapers is taken into account. Children are exposed to newspapers in school,[1] but when those who say they read newspapers are asked where they usually get to see or read the paper, nine out of ten at every age say "at home" (see table 1).

Before studying children's awareness of newspapers, and their attitudes and behavior, we must therefore first ask which children have a newspaper present in the home.[2] Newspapers are present in the vast majority of homes. Only 9 percent of the children in this study lived in households that take no newspaper weekdays or Sunday. Seven out of 10 (72%) lived in households that had a daily newspaper all 5

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[1] A majority of children (61%) have used newspapers in school at some time, 41% in the current year. See Daily Newspapers in American Classrooms (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980), which examines the incidence and impact of using newspapers in school in conjunction with availability at home.

[2] This information was obtained from the parent.

Table 1

WHERE CHILDREN USUALLY GET TO SEE OR READ A WEEKDAY PAPER

(Based on all who "ever read or look into a
weekday copy of the paper")

		Age:			
	Total	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
At home	93%	91%	95%	94%	91%
School	6	6	5	5	9
Library	2	-	1	1	3
Friend's house	1	1	*	1	1
Relatives	1	1	1	1	-
Train, bus, street	*	-	*	-	*
Other	2	2	1	2	3
No answer	1	3	1	1	1
Weighted bases: **	(925)	(140)	(223)	(270)	(293)

* Less than 0.5%

** Percentage bases shown through the remainder of this report are the weighted bases except where otherwise indicated. Generally, the unweighted bases are approximately a fifth smaller than the weighted bases.

Note: Percentages add to more than 100 because of multiple answers.

Table 2

AVAILABILITY OF NEWSPAPERS TO CHILDREN AT HOME

		Percent of Children
Weekday papers:		
All 5 weekdays		72%
- home delivery	61	
- other	11	
Some weekdays		14
No (0) weekdays		14
Sunday/weekend papers:		
All Sundays/weekends		72%
- home delivery	60	
- other	12	
Some Sundays/weekends		9
No Sunday/weekend paper		19
Weekday & Sunday/weekend combined:*		
All 5 weekdays & all Sundays/weekends		64%
- home delivered	52	
- other	12	
No weekdays or Sundays/weekends		9
Base:		(1517)

*Those living in households taking a paper some weekdays or Sundays (27%) are not shown.

weekdays, mostly home delivered. And 64 percent had a daily and a Sunday (or weekend) newspaper regularly available (see table 2).

Despite these sizable proportions, the regular presence of a newspaper in the home varies with a range of family and class characteristics familiar from adult readership studies. Daily and Sunday newspapers are more frequently available to children whose parents are white, better educated, richer, living in the suburbs, etc. The weekday paper is most often regularly available in the homes of children living in Northeastern states (where there is a larger proportion of suburban residents than elsewhere in the country). The Sunday paper is most available to children in North Central states. Both newspapers are least often available to children who live in the South, and to non-white children (see table 3).

Today's changing patterns of family structure and women's employment also affect the regular availability of a daily newspaper. More than three-fourths of the children in households with both a male and female head have such a newspaper, as compared with only half of children in single-parent households. Overall, children whose mothers are employed are somewhat more likely to have a newspaper than children whose mothers are housewives. But the availability of a newspaper bears little relationship to household TV exposure. Households in which TV is used with some moderation are only slightly more likely to have a daily paper (see table 4).

Table 3

PERCENT OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE NEWSPAPERS AT HOME REGULARLY,* BY FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

(In percentages)

	Bases:	Have newspapers all 5 weekdays	Have all 4 Sunday/ weekend newspapers
Total Children	(1517)	72%	72%
By Mother's Education**			
Some college, plus	(374)	87	88
High school graduate	(703)	77	77
Less than HS graduate	(438)	53	51
By Family Income			
$20,000 or more	(466)	87	89
$10,000 - $19,999	(503)	76	75
Less than $10,000	(391)	46	47
By Race			
White	(1167)	79	77
Non-white	(326)	51	55
By Geographic Location			
Metro, central city	(504)	68	69
Metro, suburban fringe	(407)	85	85
Small town and rural	(606)	68	66
By Region			
Northeast	(402)	84	74
North Central	(405)	74	81
South	(480)	61	63
West	(230)	71	72

* "Newspapers at home regularly" is used in this report to mean having a daily newspaper at home all 5 weekdays.

** 89% of the adult respondents in the study were the children's mothers.

Table 4

CHILDREN WHO HAVE NEWSPAPERS AT HOME REGULARLY, BY FAMILY BACKGROUND AND TV USE

(In percentages)

	Bases:	Have newspapers all 5 weekdays	Have all 4 Sunday/ weekend newspapers
By Mother's Employment*			
Works full-time	(347)	73%	74%
Works part-time	(194)	83	86
Housewife	(735)	71	68
By Family Structure			
Male & female head**	(1235)	78	77
Single parent	(282)	49	52
By Household Daily TV: (time set is on at home)			
9 hours or more	(401)	68	73
5-8 hours	(648)	76	74
Less than 5 hours	(450)	71	70

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* Only children of mothers in these three categories are shown.

** The male and female heads present in the household in almost all cases were the children's parents.

Newspaper availability also varied somewhat with the age of the children. It is known that younger adults are less avid newspaper subscribers or readers, and as we will show, younger children are much less likely to be newspaper readers. Here we see that the former has some bearing on the latter: children under 12 are also less likely to have a newspaper at home every day because their parents are of course younger (see table 5).[1] This suggests that declining newspaper readership among younger adults be viewed not simply in terms of their own current or future reading habits but also in terms of how this may influence children's developing interests in newspapers. Younger parents less often provide either role models or the newspaper itself.

Table 5

NEWSPAPERS AVAILABLE IN HOUSEHOLD BY AGE OF CHILD
(In percentages)

	Bases:	Have newspapers all 5 weekdays	Have all 4 Sunday/ weekend newspapers	Every Day: Daily and Sunday
6- 8	(429)	69%	69%	60%
9-11	(368)	69	69	60
12-14	(363)	76	75	68
15-17	(357)	77	77	70

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[1] Younger children are also less likely to have parents who are heavy newspaper readers -- i.e. parents who read a daily paper almost every day:

	% whose parents read a daily newspaper 4 or 5 days of the week
6- 8	48%
9-11	54%
12-14	60%
15-17	62%

Having reviewed findings on access to a newspaper for children of differing ages and family backgrounds separately, we can combine these two elements and show how age and family characteristics jointly affect the chances that a paper is present in each child's home (see table 6). The data indicate that at any age children from more favored backgrounds -- better educated or higher-income families -- have significantly greater access to a daily paper. Class differences are also apparent in the greater access to a paper afforded children in two-parent households, those living in the suburbs, and those whose mothers work only part-time.[1] And at every age, sizable race and regional differences exist in the regular availability of a daily paper, although in the latter case the differences become smaller for successively older groups of children.

In general, family social class is a more important source of variation in home availability than is the age of the child. This is clearly seen when we look at availability of a paper in the homes of the youngest children, those age 6 to 8, who have the least access to the paper on a regular basis of all age groups. For example, while 69 percent of all 6 to 8 year-olds are exposed to a daily paper regularly, the proportion drops to less than half among those who are non-white, living with only one parent, in families with an income under $10,000, or whose mother did not finish high school. The variety

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[1] For other data on these interrelated aspects of the children's family backgrounds as they affect access to newspapers and other mass media, see Mass Media in the Family Setting (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980), another report in this series.

Table 6

AVAILABILITY OF A DAILY NEWSPAPER AT HOME REGULARLY,* BY FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS AND AGE OF CHILD

(In percentages)

	Age:							
	6-8		9-11		12-14		15-17	
By Mother's Education	%	Bases	%	Bases	%	Bases	%	Bases
Some college, plus	90	(111)	83	(86)	85	(93)	89	(85)
High school graduate	70	(204)	77	(164)	83	(167)	79	(169)
Less than HS graduate	47	(114)	47	(118)	57	(103)	64	(103)
By Family Income								
$20,000 or more	86	(117)	87	(97)	88	(132)	87	(121)
$10,000-$19,999	74	(167)	77	(132)	78	(98)	79	(106)
Less than $10,000	40	(115)	42	(106)	57	(93)	51	(78)
By Race								
White	76	(323)	76	(213)	79	(232)	84	(229)
Non-white	46	(99)	46	(87)	58	(67)	55	(74)
By Mother's Employment								
Works full-time	76	(71)	67	(72)	76	(78)	73	(126)
Works part-time	82	(51)	86	(42)	80	(55)	85	(47)
Housewife	66	(245)	67	(189)	77	(178)	78	(124)
By Family Structure								
Male and female head	75	(356)	76	(299)	81	(294)	80	(287)
Single parent	38	(73)	38	(70)	55	(69)	66	(71)
By Household Daily TV								
9 hours or more	66	(108)	67	(96)	71	(97)	72	(99)
5-8 hours	71	(181)	74	(152)	81	(142)	77	(173)
Less than 5 hours	70	(130)	62	(116)	74	(123)	82	(80)
By Geographic Location								
Metro, central city	61	(143)	62	(127)	75	(119)	76	(116)
Metro, suburban fringe	83	(114)	80	(90)	84	(108)	93	(95)
Small town and rural	66	(173)	68	(151)	70	(136)	67	(147)
By Region								
Northeastern	85	(105)	81	(99)	81	(102)	91	(97)
North Central	64	(108)	77	(84)	82	(101)	76	(113)
South	60	(151)	57	(136)	65	(107)	66	(87)
West	73	(66)	63	(49)	76	(54)	76	(62)

*Note: See tables 3 and 4 for total household availability in each demographic group.

of disadvantages represented by these social facts that children may experience in daily life thus extends to the case of access to the daily newspaper as well.

Contacts with the Newspaper as an Institution

Children can learn about the newspaper not only from its presence in the home but also by having its role highlighted for them through other kinds of encounters. Only one child in five has ever visited a newspaper plant (see table 7). Trips are rarely made by the youngest (perhaps because of anticipated safety problems), but even by the mid-teens only one-third have done so. Middle-class youngsters are more likely to have been taken on such a trip than those from lower-status family backgrounds. These outings are mainly arranged through the schools;[1] clearly, if such visits can help awaken children's interest in the newspaper, much more needs to be done to promote such school trips all over the country.

Despite the popularity of films such as "All the President's Men" and TV's "Lou Grant" show, only 30 percent of the children could recall seeing a movie or TV program that showed how a newspaper is produced, a figure that varied little among children in different age or family categories. By comparison, one can easily imagine how other institutions -- for example hospitals, the Army or police

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[1] See Daily Newspapers in American Classrooms (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980).

Table 7

CHILDREN'S CONTACTS WITH NEWSPAPERS AS AN INSTITUTION

	Bases:	Have ever visited newspaper plant	Have seen movie or TV show about newspapers	Have read article or book about newspapers
Total	(1517)	20%	30%	12%
Boys	(777)	22	32	12
Girls	(240)	19	27	11
6- 8	(429)	3	25	6
9-11	(368)	18	31	12
12-14	(363)	30	33	16
15-17	(357)	34	30	15
By Mother's Education				
Some college, plus	(374)	23	31	14
High school grad.	(703)	22	30	12
Less than HS grad.	(438)	16	28	10
By Family Income				
$20,000 or more	(466)	23	32	13
$10,000-$19,999	(503)	20	34	11
Less than $10,000	(391)	15	24	11
By Race				
White	(1167)	22	30	12
Non-white	(326)	16	27	11
By Daily Nsp. Availability				
All 5 days	(1097)	23	32	13
Some weekdays	(205)	19	19	8
No (0) days	(215)	9	28	8
By Geographic Location				
Metro central city	(504)	20	26	12
Metro suburban fringe	(407)	18	34	13
Small town and rural	(606)	22	30	10

Questions: "Have you ever visited a newspaper to see how a newspaper is made or put together?"

"Have you ever seen a movie or TV program that showed how a newspaper is made or put together?"

"Have you ever read an article or book about how a newspaper is made or put together?"

departments -- might have fared if children's awareness of how they function (based on their appearance in the mass media) had been tested.

Finally, still fewer children (12%) have ever read an article or book that featured a newspaper prominently enough for them to remember it. Here too, differences among children are minor. None of these findings suggest that, in the senses noted, the newspaper is an identifiable element in the community or a significant institution in the minds of most children.

Children's Images of Newspaper Content

Children do better in identifying what's in a newspaper. Practically every child at one time or another has heard the riddle, "What's black, white, and read all over?" When we reversed the thrust of this question and asked them what's in a newspaper or what do people look for in one, four out of five (80%) were able to name at least one part of the paper. As might be anticipated, older children did progressively better: 90 percent of the teenagers identified at least one type of newspaper content (see table 8).

The presence of a newspaper in the home made a difference in children's familiarity with the paper. Youngsters without a paper at home every day are understandably less well informed; among the youngest group (age 6 to 8), only just over half (53%) were able to offer any answer. But in no age group was there a difference greater than 10 percent between those with and without a paper regularly available to them. As they grow older, the images children have of

Table 9

AVERAGE NUMBER OF NEWSPAPER PARTS RECALLED BY CHILDREN BY HOME AVAILABILITY

		Daily newspaper in the home:	
	Base:	All five days	Less often or not at all
6- 8	(429)	1.61	1.27
9-11	(368)	2.79	2.49
12-14	(363)	3.31	2.96
15-17	(357)	3.44	2.97

What types of editorial content are most vivid in children's spontaneous recollections? Here again, their increasingly detailed images of the newspaper are apparent. For the youngest (age 6 to 8), comics tend to be the one item most readily recalled. But by ages 9 to 11, sports join the comics at the center of attention. At this age and for older children, the news begins to be identified as a principal ingredient with increasing frequency, and sports overtakes comics in their recollections. And many other parts of the paper begin to receive some notice. In general, availability of a paper seems mainly to affect younger children's recall of comics and sports, but has a variable effect upon the recall of other parts of the paper (see table 10).

Putting together these findings on children's images of the paper, one might call the newspaper a "black box" for most children, and perhaps for many adults as well. How the paper goes about carrying

Table 10

CHILDREN'S RECALL OF NEWSPAPER CONTENT BY AGE OF CHILD AND PRESENCE OF DAILY NEWSPAPER*

(In percentages)

Age of child:

	6-8		9-11		12-14		15-17	
Content Recalled**	have paper daily	do not	have paper daily	do not	have paper daily	do not	have paper daily	do not
Comics or jokes	43%	31%	49%	42%	48%	35%	40%	32%
Sports	19	15	50	33	58	58	55	43
General news	23	17	25	28	25	26	34	37
Ads (general)	11	13	18	18	19	23	15	24
Classified ads	7	4	11	15	18	19	28	18
Weather reports	5	10	19	16	20	16	15	26
Accidents, etc.	15	15	15	19	12	19	13	13
Social news	8	3	10	16	19	16	18	24
Local news	3	3	11	11	17	20	24	17
Movie ads	4	2	12	15	19	10	10	10
U.S. news	4	5	7	6	17	11	12	7
TV, radio listings	6	4	16	11	11	6	10	5
Foreign news	1	2	8	3	11	18	13	7
Front page	2	1	9	3	10	1	13	17
Personal advice	1	-	6	7	13	6	14	4
Horoscopes	2	-	5	3	8	5	15	10
Puzzles, games, etc.	8	2	6	3	3	6	5	-
Editorials	-	-	4	1	6	3	10	2
Bases:	(295)	(135)	(253)	(116)	(275)	(89)	(275)	(82)

---

* It should be noted that the families of half those who "do not" have a newspaper available daily nevertheless take a weekday paper occasionally.

** The intent of this recall question was to tap children's general images and perceptions of the newspaper, not what they read or look at -- although the two are related. The latter question made use of a list of parts of the paper, producing higher levels of readership of most parts than are reflected in these findings on images of the paper.

out its role and function every day is something of a mystery. But what comes out of the black box is more readily identified, especially with the handy evidence offered by the daily presence of a paper in their homes.

ATTITUDES TOWARD NEWSPAPERS

How Mothers Feel about Their Children Reading Newspapers

More than eight out of ten mothers (85%) approve of their child's reading a newspaper.[1] A large majority (77%) also approves of the child watching TV. But their approval of newspapers is more emphatic: 33% strongly approve of newspaper reading, as compared with only 8% for TV watching (see table 11).

Maternal approval of newspaper reading is high for children at all ages -- 90% approve for their 15-17 year-olds and as many as 78% for their 6-8 year-olds. But approval of newspapers intensifies for older children: the proportion of mothers who approve strongly rises from 20% for 6-8 year-old children to 46% for 15-17 year-old children. By comparison, strong approval of TV is low for all age groups.

As might be expected, "strong" approval is greater on the part of better-educated or more affluent mothers and those who are themselves more newspaper-oriented. An interesting exception is that non-white mothers' endorsement of their child's reading of a newspaper almost equals that of white mothers, despite the fact that non-white mothers are themselves less likely to be newspaper readers.[2] The same is true for single parents compared with others (see table 12).

---

1) Eight out of ten mothers also approve of their child's using a newspaper in school. See Daily Newspapers in American Classrooms (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980).

2) For other findings of parental attitudes and readership see Mass Media in the Family Setting (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980). Black parents formed two-thirds of all non-white parents.

Table 11

MOTHERS' APPROVAL OF CHILD'S READING A NEWSPAPER AND OF CHILD'S WATCHING TV

(In percentages)

		Age of Child			
	Total	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
Child's reading newspapers					
Strongly approve	33%	20%	31%	38%	46%
Approve	52	58	53	50	44
Total approve	85	78	84	88	90
Child's watching TV					
Strongly approve	8%	10%	7%	7%	9%
Approve	69	70	69	68	68
Total approve	77	80	76	75	77
Bases:	(1517)	(429)	(368)	(363)	(357)

Question: "How do you feel about (CHILD'S NAME) reading newspapers? (SHOW CARD) I strongly approve, I approve, I disapprove, I strongly disapprove, doesn't matter to me."

(The same question was asked about the child's "watching TV, listening to the radio," etc.)

To summarize, the only difference that exists in maternal support for their children's newspaper reading is in the warmth of their approval. The general attitude is highly favorable, and this is true for most children despite the differences in their family background. Newspaper reading is seen as a valuable activity for children, whether or not mothers themselves make use of a newspaper.

Table 12

MOTHERS' APPROVAL OF CHILD'S READING A NEWSPAPER BY FAMILY BACKGROUND

	Base:	Approve strongly %	Total approve %
By Mother's Education			
Some college, plus	(290)	45	88
High school graduate	(543)	30	85
Less than HS graduate	(321)	25	82
By Family Income			
$20,000 or more	(347)	43	86
$10,000 - $19,999	(408)	30	84
Under $10,000	(284)	25	84
By Presence of Daily Newspaper in Household			
All 5 days	(832)	37	87
Some weekdays	(158)	24	82
No (0) weekdays	(166)	19	73
By Race			
White	(909)	33	86
Non-white	(226)	31	82
By Family Structure			
Male & female head	(914)	33	84
Single parent	(216)	31	86
By Sex of Child			
Boy	(586)	35	85
Girl	(570)	30	84

How Children Feel about Newspapers

Children show an increasing interest in newspapers as they grow older. All children were asked to rate each of the media on a ladder-scale of 1-5 in two ways: how much they enjoy reading or listening to each, and how much each of the media tells them things they want to know about.[1] We can therefore examine two dimensions of attitudes toward newspapers: their enjoyment of reading newspapers and their perception of how relevant newspapers are to their interests.

Compared with other activities, reading newspapers ranks low as an activity children enjoy, but as they grow older their attitudes become more favorable. When asked to rate how much they like reading newspapers, the average ratings rise from 1.85 among 6-8 year-olds, to 3.13 among 15-17 year-olds. In percentage terms, only 12% of the 6-8 year-olds gave newspaper reading a highly positive scale rating (4 or 5), compared with 38% of the 15-17 year-olds (see table 13).

Table 13

HOW MUCH DO CHILDREN LIKE READING NEWSPAPERS?

Total	Average score	% who give a very positive rating (4 or 5)
6- 8	1.85	12%
9-11	2.43	19%
12-14	2.72	21%
15-17	3.13	38%

---

[1] Separate ratings were obtained for comic books, radio, newspapers, movies, books, television and magazines. See Children, Mothers and Newspapers (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1978), Tables 13 and 14 for comparative ratings of the media.

Newspapers fare much better among all children when rated on how much newspapers "tell me things I want to know about". The average ratings are generally higher on this measure and again they rise, from 2.82 among 6-8 year-olds to 3.94 among 15-17 year-olds. In percentage terms, 36% of the 6-8 year-olds perceive newspapers as clearly relevant to their own interests compared with 72% of the 15-17 year-olds (see table 14).

Table 14

HOW MUCH DO NEWSPAPERS TELL CHILDREN THINGS THEY WANT TO KNOW ABOUT?

Total	Average score	% who give a very positive rating (4 or 5)
6- 8	2.82	36%
9-11	3.36	50%
12-14	3.86	67%
15-17	3.94	72%

The results show that children can separate these two dimensions of appeal, and that they have higher esteem for the newspaper as a source of information than as enjoyable reading matter. The latter suggests that, particularly in the case of younger children, it is the act of reading itself that may be at issue. If this is true, the growth of appreciation for the newspaper as a source of interesting information is a better indicator of children's evolving tastes and attitudes than sheer liking of newspaper reading. This is also seen in other data (not shown here) that display an increasingly close correlation between scores on the two measures among progressively older children, as mastery of reading skills makes the newspaper's contents more accessible to children.

The combined effects of maturing and home influences are apparent in another finding that shows both strong liking of newspaper reading and high esteem for the paper rising with age only for those who have a paper available in the home daily. The children who don't have regular access to a paper show consistently less pleasure in reading one at every age level, but it becomes more interesting as they grow older. Clearly, greater familiarity affects children's attitudes positively, demonstrating the crucial importance of having a newspaper in the home in influencing its appeal to them.

Table 15

ATTITUDES TOWARD NEWSPAPERS BY DAILY PRESENCE OF NEWSPAPERS IN THE HOME

(In percentages)

	Like to read newspapers*		Feel newspapers' content is relevant to interests*	
	Have Paper Daily	Do Not	Have Paper Daily	Do Not
6- 8	11	16	41	26
9-11	20	18	54	42
12-14	25	9	71	56
15-17	44	20	75	65

* Percent in each age group who gave each a score of 4 or 5.

Note: See Table 10 for percentage bases.

But it is not age, reading skills or home influences alone that affect children's attitudes. One can also point to the newspaper itself as a determinant, although here our evidence is more indirect.

When we compare high ratings given by children living in central cities or suburban areas with those living in small towns and rural areas to newspapers and other media, a clear and significant difference emerges on both measures. Children in small town and rural settings show less liking and lower esteem for the newspaper. Since the latter were no less likely to have a paper available to them, it is reasonable to infer that it is the smaller size and more restricted scope of coverage of their local dailies that affects their attitudes. This difference is highlighted further by the smaller variations in children's rankings of most other media (see table 16).

Table 16

ATTITUDES TOWARD THE MEDIA OF CITY, SUBURBAN AND RURAL CHILDREN

(In percentages)

	Geographic Location:*		
Like Medium A Lot: (rate it 4 or 5)	Metro Central Cities	Metro Suburban Fringes	Small Towns, Rural Areas
TV	79	81	84
Movies	69	75	68
Radio	66	62	65
Books	48	42	45
Comic books	41	30	35
Magazines	40	44	37
Newspapers	30	20	17
Feels Medium Tells Them What They Want To Know (rate it 4 or 5)			
TV	74	71	73
Radio	62	50	54
Newspapers	61	59	48
Books	60	63	54
Magazines	49	51	42
Movies	48	41	40
Comic books	26	18	18
Bases:	(504)	(407)	(606)

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*The percentages shown are for children in each geographic location who rated these media at or near the top of a ladder-scale, with "1" as the bottom rung and "5" as the top rung.

NEWSPAPER READING

When Does the Newspaper Become Comprehensible?

Reading skills account for a substantial share of children's varying levels of enthusiasm about newspaper reading. This is clearly evident in their own assessment of the problems they encounter in making use of a paper. A majority of children (53%) under age 9 say they have a lot of trouble reading the newspaper. In the next age bracket only 12 percent say they have a lot of difficulty, but a majority confess to having some trouble reading it. By the time children reach the early teen years, a majority has no trouble, and among those age 15 to 17, over three-quarters say they have no trouble reading a paper. But even by these late adolescent years, over one child in five still claims to have some problems in reading the paper (see table 17).

Table 17

EASE OF READING NEWSPAPERS

		Proportion saying they:			
	Bases:	Have no trouble	Have a little trouble	Have a lot of trouble	Don't know/ no answer
6- 8	(429)	9	32	53	6
9-11	(368)	33	53	12	2
12-14	(363)	57	37	5	1
15-17	(357)	77	18	4	1

Question: "When it comes to reading the newspaper, would you say you:

Have no trouble reading it.
Have a little trouble reading it, or
Have a lot of trouble reading it."

The daily presence of a newspaper in the household has no bearing on the ability of the very youngest children to read a newspaper. But at every age thereafter, those who have a newspaper at home regularly show greater facility in reading the newspaper. Obviously, it is not simply the presence of a newspaper which accounts for this. Parents who take a newspaper regularly read one more and attach greater importance to the daily paper.[1] And indeed, children from more favored family backgrounds, where the daily paper has a more prominent place, are significantly more at ease in reading a newspaper, whatever their age level. Here again is evidence of the effects of the transmission of family values and advantages from parents to children in forming the latter's newspaper reading habits and attitudes (see table 18).

When Does Reading the Newspaper Become a Habit?

Newspaper reading is an infrequent activity in early childhood and does not really begin to take hold until the teen years. Among 6 to 8 year-olds, only one-third ever read or look at a daily paper, and only a fraction reads one with great regularity. Even at this tender age, claims about reading appear to be valid: two-thirds of this youngest group were able to name correctly the paper they said they "ever" read and specified the parts they looked at. By the pre-teen years, three-fifths (61%) said they read or look at a daily, and over one-fifth defined themselves as frequent readers. In both senses, then, readership builds up quite rapidly between the ages of 6 and 11 (see table 19), and the local newspaper takes on an increasingly sharper identity for children.

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[1] For findings on the links between availability and parents' reading see Mass Media in the Family Setting (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980).

Table 18

PROPORTION OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE NO TROUBLE READING A NEWSPAPER BY PRESENCE OF NEWSPAPER IN HOME AND FAMILY SOCIAL CLASS POSITION

(In percentages)

	Child has no trouble	Bases (100%=N)
By Presence of Paper		
Available all 5 weekdays:		
6- 8	9%	(295)
9-11	37	(253)
12-14	61	(274)
15-17	82	(275)
Available less often or not at all:		
6- 8	9	(134)
9-11	23	(115)
12-14	44	(89)
15-17	67	(82)
By Mother's Education		
Some college, plus	51	(374)
High school graduate	43	(703)
Less than HS graduate	34	(438)
By Family Income		
$20,000 or more	51	(466)
$10,000 - $19,999	38	(503)
Less than $10,000	35	(391)

Table 19

THREE MEASURES OF
CHILDREN'S DAILY NEWSPAPER READING

	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
Ever read a paper	33%	61%	75%	82%
Can name newspaper*	67	89	99	96
Can name contents*	64	84	92	91
Read "everyday, most days"	7%	24%	43%	52%
Read "yesterday"	6%	21%	42%	46%
Bases:	(429)	(368)	(363)	(357)

*These percentages are based on those who "ever" read a weekday newspaper.

Questions: "Many newspapers are printed every day or all seven days in the week. Those that are printed on Monday through Friday -- school days -- are called weekday papers.

(For frequency of reading:)

a. Do you ever read or look into a weekday copy of a newspaper?

b. (HAND CARD) How often do you usually read or look at a weekday copy of a newspaper? (READ LIST) -- everyday, most days, 2-3 times a week, once a week, or less often than once a week?"

(For "yesterday" reading:)

"When was the last day you looked at anything in a weekday copy of a newspaper?" (If "today"), "When was the last time before today that you looked at anything in a weekday copy of a newspaper?"

By the teen years, three children out of four look at a daily paper at least occasionally, the habit of regular reading becomes better established, and the local newspaper assumes a clear identity for most children. Depending upon the measure chosen,[1] around 40-50 percent of children over the age of 12 look at a daily paper practically every day. And by the age of 17, the year immediately prior to the lower limit used in adult readership research, norms for reading are quite close to those for "yesterday" reading shown by young adults in recent studies.[2]

Findings based on all three measures of newspaper reading show that the process is not smoothly continuous from year to year. The lines traced in figure 1 (below) suggest that the biggest jumps occur as a result of children's rapid mastery of reading skills in the early years up to age 12. After that, readership grows fairly steadily as the reading habit takes hold and teenagers come to value what the daily paper has to offer them.

That it is the reading habit which significantly governs use of the newspaper by children is made clear when we look at how much time they spend with the paper, books, magazines, etc. Among those who read a daily paper yesterday, reading is fairly perfunctory until the teen years. The rare 6-8 year old who reads one spent an average of 9 minutes with the paper, while teenagers spent 19 minutes reading one (see table 20). By comparison, the average for adults is 34 minutes.

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1) For an analysis of how the two more precise measures of daily reading -- "yesterday" and "every day, most days" -- are related among children in each of the four age groups, see Appendix A of this report. The two measures yield quite similar norms for reading.

2) See The Daily Diet of News (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1978), a Readership Project survey conducted in 1977, for comparable data on adult readership.

**Figure 1:
Three measures of
daily newspaper reading
by children.**

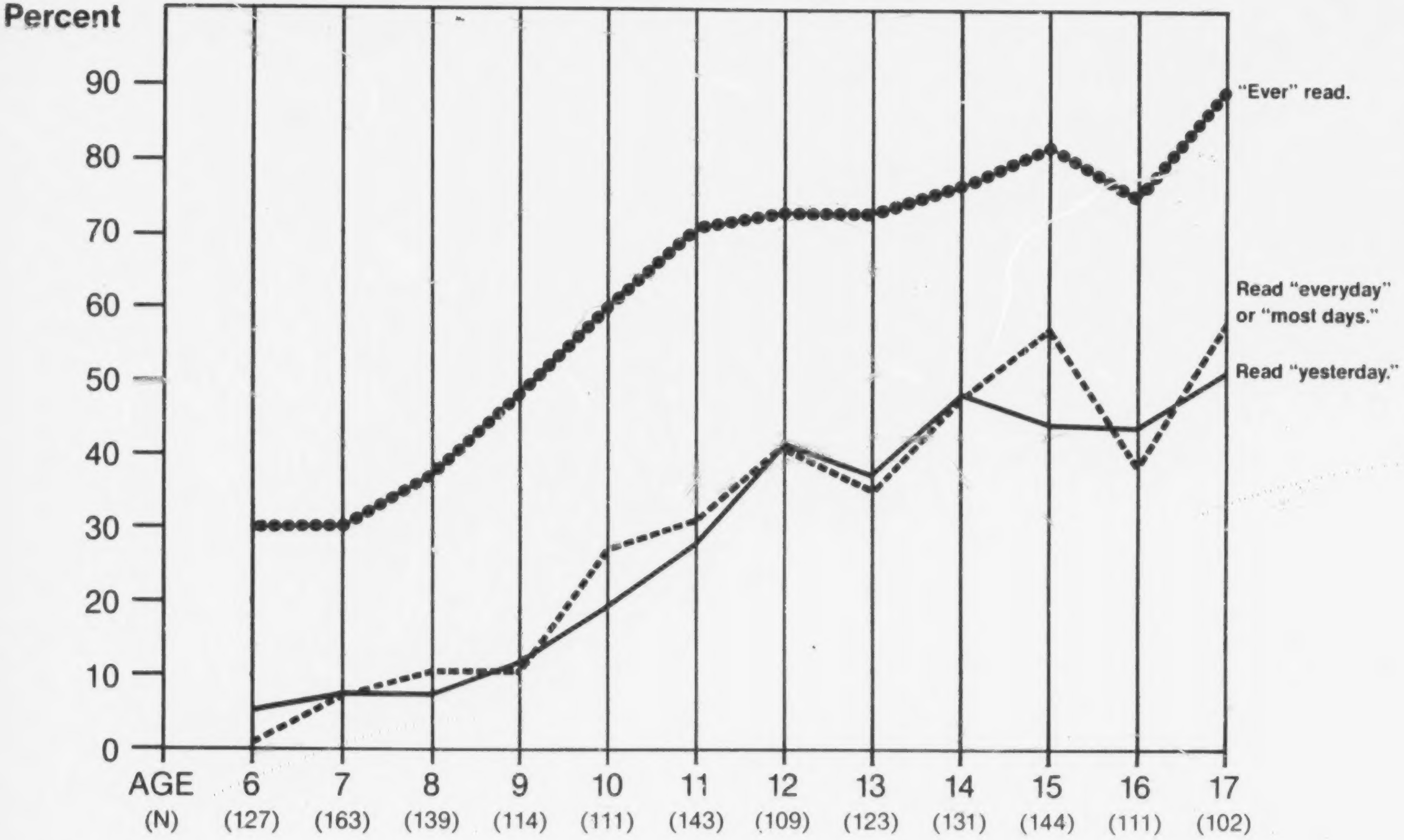

Table 20

MEDIAN TIME SPENT READING THE NEWSPAPER YESTERDAY

Age:	
6- 8	9 minutes
9-11	11 minutes
12-14	14 minutes
15-17	19 minutes

Question: "Think about yesterday: About how much time yesterday did you spend reading or looking at something in a newspaper?" (Time recorded in 5-minute intervals.)

Reading of newspapers is intimately linked with the reading of other printed matter. The proportion of children who spent as much as half an hour reading books, comic books or magazines (not counting what they read for school) shows much the same progression with age as newspaper reading does. But at every age, the frequent newspaper readers are better readers in general. Teenagers who don't read a paper daily are, in proportion, about as often heavy readers of other printed matter as children under age 12 who read the paper frequently (see table 21). Nothing could show more clearly than this finding how much of a stake the newspaper industry has in the successful teaching of reading in early childhood.

Household Influences on Children's Reading

The heavy dependence of children's newspaper readership on access to one regularly in the home is readily apparent in some other findings. At every age, children living in newspaper-using homes are significantly more likely to be readers than those whose parents take a paper

Table 21

PROPORTION OF CHILDREN WHO SPENT 30 MINUTES OR MORE READING BOOKS, COMIC BOOKS OR MAGAZINES YESTERDAY

		Among those who read newspapers:		
	Total	Every day, most days	Less often	Not at all
6- 8	12%	21%	14%	10%
9-11	22	34	16	20
12-14	26	33	26	14
15-17	31	44	18	16

irregularly or not at all (see table 22). And the gap between children in the two types of households increases with age on all three measures of readership. Availability plays a particularly weighty role in determining regularity of reading for children over the age of 12, when reading skills have become less of a problem. Here again the crucial part played by parental consumption patterns on children's reading is clearly visible. If a child does not have a daily paper at home regularly, he is no more likely to have read a paper "yesterday" at ages 15 to 17 than at ages 6 to 8.

Given this strong relationship, it can be expected that the factors affecting availability of a daily paper in the home also will be correlated with children's newspaper reading. And indeed, this is the case, although the three-cornered relationships between parental or household characteristics, children's age, and the three measures of reading are fairly complex and resist easy summarization (see table 23). In general, family social class factors accelerate the

Table 22

CHILDREN'S NEWSPAPER READING BY PRESENCE OF NEWSPAPER IN THE HOUSEHOLD AND AGE

(In percentages)

By presence of newspaper in household:	Ever Read	Read Every Day	Read Yesterday	Bases:
Total				
Paper home daily	69%	38%	36%	(1097)
Less often, not at all	40	10	6	(422)
6-8				
Paper at home daily	39	8	7	(295)
Less often, not at all	19	4	5	(135)
9-11				
Paper at home daily	67	26	27	(253)
Less often, not at all	46	19	6	(116)
12-14				
Paper at home daily	84	55	54	(275)
Less often, not at all	45	6	7	(89)
15-17				
Paper at home daily	89	64	58	(275)
Less often, not at all	59	15	6	(82)

build-up of reading through the early years (ages 6 to 11), and affect the likelihood that a child had read a paper yesterday with particular force. With the onset of adolescence, reading frequency levels off or actually declines for certain groups of children (minority, low income, small town or rural residents), while for the more advantaged it continues to advance at a moderate pace. Here we can see the operation of social segmentation processes in the family during the childhood years that yield the familiar demographic differences in newspaper reading in early adulthood. Like a tree's roots, the

Table 23

CHILDREN'S NEWSPAPER READING BY FAMILY BACKGROUND AND RESIDENCY

(In percentages)

	"Ever" read				Read "every day, most days"				Read "yesterday"			
	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
By Mother's Education												
Some college, plus	41%	65%	85%	88%	8%	28%	56%	65%	3%	26%	48%	61%
High school grad.	29	66	74	85	6	27	41	57	6	25	46	49
Less than HS grad.	31	51	66	72	8	16	34	36	10	11	32	29
By Family Income												
$20,000 or more	35	64	86	87	5	25	48	59	4	27	47	49
$10,000-$19,999	39	69	70	84	10	29	45	55	9	26	44	52
Less than $10,000	24	50	67	68	5	13	35	31	4	11	34	30
By Mother's Employment												
Employed	43	74	78	83	8	28	41	59	5	22	44	50
Housewife	27	55	74	77	6	16	47	44	7	19	48	39
By Family Structure												
Male & female head	33	66	76	84	8	25	45	54	7	23	46	49
Single parent	29	40	71	73	3	19	33	47	3	11	28	34
By Race												
White	33	63	78	83	6	25	46	57	7	23	46	51
Non-white	31	53	60	77	8	21	31	30	5	13	24	30
By Geographic Location												
Metro, central city	29	59	75	74	6	24	45	51	6	24	41	51
Metro, suburban	36	69	79	91	4	28	48	56	2	28	46	46
Small town and rural	35	58	72	76	9	22	36	51	10	14	41	42
By Region												
Northeast	42	57	73	87	7	23	47	59	9	26	43	50
North Central	33	69	78	86	5	25	44	57	6	19	46	48
South	29	60	73	69	8	24	46	43	7	18	36	43
West	27	61	76	87	8	20	44	47	3	20	46	40

reading habits of children flourish, grow slowly, or fail to develop over time according to the nourishing influences of the surrounding environment.

Finally, it can be shown that it is the parents' own readership of newspapers, not simply the availability of the paper in the home, that directly influences children's reading habits. The modeling of behavior becomes particularly evident with the onset of adolescence. By ages 12 to 14, 57 percent of children, both of whose parents read a paper regularly, are themselves frequent readers of one, compared with one in five (21%) of children whose parents are less devoted to a daily paper. The gap widens still further among older teenagers: the comparable proportions are 69 vs. 26 percent who are frequent readers. Three out of eight (38%) of all children over the age of 12 whose parents read a daily irregularly or not at all never read a daily newspaper themselves (see table 24).

Thus, the home influences on children's newspaper reading, both indirect and direct, are extremely strong, and make consistently more of a difference as children grow older. This confirms the view that parents as well as children must be targets of promotional efforts whose long-range goals are to increase newspaper reading by the coming generation.[1] Turning parents who are occasional readers into frequent readers has both immediate and long-term significance for newspaper circulation and readership.

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1) For other pertinent findings on this point see Mass Media in the Family Setting (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980).

Table 24

CHILDREN'S NEWSPAPER READING BY PARENTAL READERSHIP OF DAILY PAPERS

(In percentages)

		Parent(s) read 4-5 weekdays	Parent(s) read less/not at all
6- 8:	Child reads a paper		
	Every day, most days	7%	6%
	Less often	32	20
	Not at all	61	74
	Bases: (N) =	(205)	(225)
9-11:	Child reads a paper		
	Every day, most days	29%	17%
	Less often	36	39
	Not at all	35	44
	Bases: (N) =	(201)	(169)
12-14:	Child reads a paper		
	Every day, most days	57%	21%
	Less often	28	37
	Not at all	15	42
	Bases: (N) =	(220)	(144)
15-17:	Child reads a paper		
	Every day, most days	69%	26%
	Less often	23	40
	Not at all	8	34
	Bases: (N) =	(222)	(137)

Newspapers vs. TV or Newspapers and TV?

An examination of children's newspaper reading patterns would be incomplete without taking their television watching into account. At the household level, as we saw earlier, television is such a universal presence that there is an insignificant relationship between the amount of time a set is on and the presence of a daily paper in the children's homes. Does the amount of time they actually spend with television affect their newspaper reading?

Television viewing was measured by a question that sought to determine the number of programs each child watched yesterday, a more concrete way of counting for younger children than asking them to estimate the amount of time they spent. The day was broken into three dayparts, and the names of the shows watched in each were recorded for every child. The total number of shows seen in all three dayparts forms our measure of yesterday's TV watching. (Those who did not watch yesterday -- 14% of all children -- were asked to estimate the number of shows they watch on an average school day.)

Taking the group of children who watched TV in each daypart as a base, the average number of programs watched on a school day was 1.75 in the morning, 2.1 in the afternoon, and 1.9 in the evening. Across the dayparts on an average weekday, the proportions of all children who watched television were as follows:

Watched four or more shows:	36%
Watched two or three shows:	39%
Watched one show or none:	25%

When we look at the readership of children in each age group who watched more or fewer TV programs during the same day, we find only small fluctuations around the overall age norms for yesterday reading. Within each age group, there is essentially no difference in newspaper reading that is related to the children's TV program viewing (see table 25). As with adults, the two activities fail to show any displacement effect (i.e. more TV watching linked with less reading of papers),[1] using the most direct test of such a relationship: activities on the same day.

Table 25

YESTERDAY READERSHIP OF NEWSPAPERS BY AGE AND TELEVISION VIEWING

(Percent who read a paper yesterday)

Child's TV Watching Yesterday	Age: 6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
Saw 4 or more shows	9%	22%	38%	45%
Saw 2-3 shows	7	21	45	51
Saw less than 2 shows	2	17	46	39

Sunday Newspaper Reading: The Appeal of Comics

So far, we have been analyzing children's newspaper reading on the average school day. The Sunday paper plays a much different role in their lives, primarily because of the comics pages. Sunday newspaper reading is more extensive especially during the earliest

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1) For further evidence on the complementary relationship between adult television watching and newspaper readership see The Daily Diet of News (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1978).

years of childhood. And although the frequency of reading of daily and Sunday papers can't be directly compared -- in the average month, a child only has to read four issues to be termed a "regular" reader, compared with 20 issues of a daily paper -- on the whole it is the Sunday paper that seems to be the more popular of the two (see table 26).

Table 26

SUNDAY AND DAILY NEWSPAPER READING
(In percentages)

	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
Read Sunday newspaper	52%	71%	78%	81%
Sunday, not daily	28	20	11	9
Sunday and daily	24	51	67	72
Read daily paper only	8	10	8	9
Read neither paper	40	19	14	9
Bases:	(429)	(368)	(363)	(357)

Questions: "Do you ever read or look at anything in a Sunday or weekend newspaper?"

"Those that are printed on Monday through Friday -- school days -- are called weekday papers. Do you ever read or look into a weekday copy of a newspaper?"

Reading of both papers climbs steeply with age. Among 6 to 8 year-olds, over half (52%) ever read a Sunday paper, and more than one-quarter (28%) only read a Sunday paper. By the late teens, four-fifths are reading a Sunday paper, and eight out of nine who do also look at a daily. Thus, the newspaper diet becomes richer over the years, and it is the Sunday paper that the youngest find more palatable.

Without question, the main reason for the Sunday paper's greater attraction is the comics pages. In fact, there is some reason to believe that reading the comics is not equated in younger children's minds with reading a newspaper. While 52 percent say they read a Sunday paper, even more -- 61 percent -- say they read the Sunday comics (see table 27). Part of the reason for its success is its accessibility. Only 2 percent of the children spontaneously mentioned that they don't read the comics because their paper doesn't carry them. And a Sunday paper is available on at least an occasional basis in 81 percent of the children's homes.[1]

In fact, the Sunday comics have such appeal that many children manage to read them even when the Sunday paper is not available in their homes. Almost one-third (31%) get to read them elsewhere, although the strongest boost to regular comics reading is clearly provided by the presence of a paper in the home every Sunday (see table 28).

Children spend appreciably more time with the Sunday paper than with the daily. The median time spent reading one is 22 minutes, vs. 16 minutes for the daily paper. But at the high end -- those who read a paper for one-half hour or more -- reading differences are

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1) See table 2, page 11.

Table 27

READING THE SUNDAY PAPER AND THE SUNDAY COMICS

	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
Read Sunday paper	52%	71%	78%	81%
Read Sunday comics	61	74	78	75
Read all past 4 Sunday papers*	29	37	55	53
Read Sunday comics all the time	17	27	38	35
Read Sunday comics all or most of the time	30	46	55	56
Bases:	(429)	(368)	(363)	(357)

* Based only on children who ever read a Sunday paper.

Question: "Do you read the Sunday comics all of the time, most of the time, only sometimes, or don't you read Sunday comics?"

Table 28

SUNDAY COMICS READING BY PRESENCE OF SUNDAY PAPER IN THE HOUSEHOLD

	Presence of Sunday paper:*		
	All Sundays	Some Sundays	Never
Total who read Sunday comics	83%	64%	31%
All the time	37	11	7
Most of the time	20	11	7
Only sometimes	26	42	17
Bases:	(1093)	(138)	(286)

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* Data on Sunday paper availability came from the mother's questionnaire.

more apparent, especially for younger children, for whom it is the comics that holds their notoriously vagrant attention longer (see table 29).

Table 29

TIME SPENT READING SUNDAY AND DAILY NEWSPAPERS

	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
Spent 30 minutes or more reading the daily paper yesterday	4%	9%	17%	35%
*Bases:	(27)	(76)	(154)	(164)
Usually spend 30 minutes or more reading the Sunday newspaper	11%	17%	35%	45%
**Bases:	(268)	(295)	(298)	(299)

*Daily reading time is based only on those who read one yesterday.

**Sunday reading time is based on those who ever read the Sunday paper.

The demographic patterns of children's Sunday readership are generally similar to those for daily paper reading. Although Sunday newspaper reading is higher than for dailies, it reaches still higher levels among children in families that are more committed to the newspaper -- the better educated, higher income families. Frequent reading is highest in the North Central states, lowest in the South and West. And to confound the conventional wisdom still further, children who watch more television -- who tend to be older and therefore better able to read -- are also slightly more likely to read the Sunday paper and the Sunday comics.

Table 30

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY NEWSPAPER READING BY FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS AND CHILD'S TV VIEWING

	Percent who ever read Sunday paper	Percent who read one past 4 Sundays	Percent who read Sunday comics all the time
By Mother's Education			
Some college, plus	75%	41%	37%
High school grad.	75	36	29
Less than HS grad.	58	24	22
By Family Income			
$20,000 or more	78	42	35
$10,000-$19,999	72	34	29
Less than $10,000	57	19	19
By Geographic Location			
Metro, central city	71	33	29
Metro, suburbs	74	37	31
Small town and rural	67	32	27
By Region			
Northeast	64	37	30
North Central	78	41	37
South	68	27	24
West	70	30	24
By Amount of TV Child Watched Yesterday			
4 shows or more	76	36	34
2 or 3 shows	68	33	25
Less than 2 shows	64	31	28

What Do Children Read in the Newspaper?

In analyzing the parts of the paper children read, several approaches can be taken. We can compare the reading of boys and girls and can also trace changes in reading interest from one age group to another. And by comparing frequent with infrequent readers in their readership of various parts, we can show which parts are more central to the growth of the reading habit.[1] In all, 21 different types of editorial content were studied, using children who ever read a paper as a basis for calculating (see table 31).

Boys and girls show both striking similarities and very different interests in the paper as they mature. *Comics*, *front page news*, and *movie listings* all become progressively more interesting to both. Beyond these top three, other parts that have about equally increasing interest include *TV-related content*, *local news*, items about *music or records*, and (at a lower level of interest) *classified ads* and *foreign news*. Boys and girls go their separate ways with respect to the rest of the listed content items read with any frequency, either in the rate of growth of interests or (in two instances) their declining readership as they get older. (Sex differences are highlighted with an asterisk in table 31.)

Boys show increasing interest in *sports news* and, to a lesser extent, in *national news*. For girls, dramatic increases are shown in their devotion to *horoscopes*, *fashion*, *personal advice* columns, *celebrity news and gossip*, and (where it is available) *teenage* items.

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1) Measuring what children read in the paper and how often they do so poses special problems, given the more elastic meanings younger children attach to such terms as "every day", "frequently" or "occasionally". After some experimentation, we settled on a response format that was easily understood by the youngest children and used it for all children, accompanied by visual aids for each part of the paper presented as the name of each part was read to the child. The frequency with which each part is read, therefore, reflects judgments of more and less interest rather than the exact number of times read on a weekly basis.

Table 31

PARTS OF THE PAPER READ "MOST OF THE TIME" BY AGE AND SEX OF CHILD

(In percentages)

		BOYS				GIRLS			
Part Read Most[1]	Total Children	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
Comics or jokes	59%	49%	64%	54%	54%	59%	61%	69%	62%
Front page	40	10	34	57	62	8	28	52	60
What movies are showing	40	16	35	50	45	16	26	64	61
Sports	33	18	43	67	62*	9	13	20	26
TV or radio listings, news	31	15	29	34	41	12	24	41	45
News about your town, city	26	7	20	36	42	7	8	30	50
Horoscopes, birth signs	25	3	10	25	18	5	20	46	67*
News, ads about music, records	23	4	14	27	33	10	12	46	32
Stories about TV celebrities, movie stars	20	4	13	19	18	7	13	40	40*
Puzzles, games	20	21	14	14	6	28	22	31	21*
News, ads about clothes, styles	18	5	6	9	6	5	15	43	54*
News about the U.S.	16	6	12	32	33*	3	7	14	20
Personal advice (Dear Abby)	16	3	4	9	15	1	14	32	48*
Teenage column, news	13	3	2	7	10	3	4	32	38*
Classified ads for jobs, autos	13	2	5	20	28	1	5	11	26
News about foreign countries	10	2	8	14	23	1	3	9	14
Social news (parties, weddings, etc.)	9	1	3	7	4	5	9	19	23*
Hobbies (stamps, sewing, cameras, etc.)	9	6	11	11	4	4	8	10	13*
Food and recipes	8	4	6	5	2	9	11	10	12
Editorials, Editor's page	4	2	1	10	8	-	1	6	7
News about business, cos., stocks	2	3	4	3	3	1	1	1	4
Bases:[2]	(1254)	(146)	(166)	(163)	(157)	(149)	(149)	(156)	(170)

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[1] Every child was asked whether each part was read "most of the time, some of the time, or not at all".

[2] Only children in each age group who ever read a paper (daily or Sunday) are shown.

*Note: Part of paper read increasingly by older boys or girls.

Girls also indicate somewhat more interest in social news and hobbies as they mature, but these trends are not as marked.

The different readership paths taken by boys and girls shown in these detailed findings are illustrative of the process that has been called "sex-role typing" in other contexts, reflecting in part the gathering force of social expectations about what are appropriate interests for them to have. Lacking comparable data on the growth of children's newspaper reading interests at some earlier time, we cannot say whether the contrasts have lessened as a result of recent social changes in women's status and the growth of egalitarian beliefs. The data show that interests begin to diverge around the age of 9 and contrasts become more emphatic during the sensitive adolescent years. By the late teens, the patterns of readership of various parts of the newspaper for boys and girls resemble those of their counterparts among young adults.[1] The findings suggest that the origins of these contrasts in readership interests reach far back into the early childhood years.

Some clues to what motivates children's growing attachment to the newspaper are provided by other findings. That children who read the paper every day or almost every day generally read more parts is not surprising. It is the occasional reader whose reading patterns offer some evidence on the potential value of certain types of content in

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1) For comparative findings on young adults from an earlier Readership Project survey, see Young Adults and the Newspaper (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1978) and Two Dimensions of News: Interest and Importance Ratings of the Editorial Content of the American Press (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1978).

converting them to frequent readers. To highlight the similarities and differences between frequent and occasional readers, we have restricted the comparison to those in both groups who say they read each part "most of the time", even though the occasional reader can be expected to read less often because the paper is less regularly available (see table 32).

Little can be said about the youngest children, since so few are frequent readers that the comparisons are unstable. But from age 9 on, we find a steadily diverging growth in hard news readership that accompanies a persistently stronger interest in sports and entertaining features among frequent readers. Except for a few cases, however, the differences in readership are not marked, and if we relax our standard to include those who read a part "some of the time" the readership profiles of frequent and occasional readers become even more similar. Features like hobbies and teenage columns are little read, not necessarily because of children's low interest in them but because few papers regularly contain such types of coverage.[1] Readership of sports news by occasional newspaper readers stabilizes at age 9, while their use of TV and movie listings increases steadily.

These findings show a diversified pattern of reading interests, with certain types of content having special appeal to younger or

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1) See another Readership Project-supported study, the Inventory of Editorial Content (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1979) for findings on the limited offerings in these categories provided by the nation's press.

Table 32

PARTS OF THE PAPER READ "MOST OF THE TIME" BY AGE AND READING FREQUENCY

(In percentages)

Part Read Most	Total Children	6-8 Freq. Rdr.	6-8 Occas. Rdr.	9-11 Freq. Rdr.	9-11 Occas. Rdr.	12-14 Freq. Rdr.	12-14 Occas. Rdr.	15-17 Freq. Rdr.	15-17 Occas. Rdr.
Comics or jokes	59%	74%	51%	73%	63%	66%	56%	64%	52%
Front page	40	28	9	55	28	63	52	72	49
What movies are showing	40	28	21	37	35	68	48	56	50
Sports	33	36	12	36	34	52	39	49	35
TV or radio listings, news	31	14	20	38	22	42	38	45	38
News about your town, city	26	28	7	18	15	49	24	54	31
Horoscopes, birth signs	25	21	5	25	8	44	29	48	39
News, ads about music, records	23	24	7	18	11	40	32	34	24
Stories about TV celebrities, movie stars	20	17	8	15	13	34	25	33	26
Puzzles, games	20	28	17	29	14	19	22	15	11
News, ads about clothes, styles	18	17	6	24	7	28	23	31	32
News about the U.S.	16	21	5	17	8	35	12	32	21
Personal advice (Dear Abby)	16	10	-	20	5	26	13	43	19
Teenage column, news	13	14	2	7	2	21	17	33	11
Classified ads for jobs, autos	13	3	-	9	3	19	12	27	26
News about foreign countries	10	7	1	7	7	18	7	21	15
Social news (parties, weddings, etc.)	9	3	5	13	4	14	11	17	11
Hobbies (stamps, sewing, cameras, etc.)	9	17	6	12	10	13	7	11	5
Food and recipes	8	7	7	11	8	8	6	5	10
Editorials, Editor's page	4	7	-	1	1	12	4	11	3
News about business, cos., stocks	2	10	2	1	4	4	-	5	-
Bases:*	(1254)	(29)	(111)	(86)	(137)	(155)	(116)	(186)	(107)

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*Only children in each age group who ever read a daily paper are shown. "Frequent readers" are defined as those reading a paper "every day" or "most days"; others are termed "occasional" readers.

Note: The small number of frequent readers in the 6-8 year-old age group makes for unstable percentages.

older children. Reading differences among frequent and occasional readers, with a few exceptions, boil down to matters of degree. This is more apparent in children's subsequent nominations of the two best-liked parts of the paper, which showed that only three parts evoke any substantial enthusiasm: comics, sports, and puzzles, the latter being mainly of interest to those under the age of 12 (see table 33). The other parts received few and widely scattered nominations as best-liked.

Table 33

TWO BEST-LIKED PARTS OF THE PAPER
(In percentages)

Content	Age: 6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	Total Children
Comics	71%	69%	52%	35%	56%
Sports	17	35	40	31	31
Puzzles, games	32	15	8	5	15
Bases:*	(295)	(315)	(318)	(326)	(1254)

*Based only on those who ever read a newspaper (daily or Sunday).

Another question that tapped children's specific interests in newspaper content asked them to name things in the paper they would like to see more of. Only one-third (34%) named something, and their preferences generally followed the prevailing reading patterns: comics for children at every age, sports for those over the age of 9, and teenage columns or news for those in the early teen years. The latent demand for the latter kind of content was also shown in answers to another question about things not now in the paper that they would like to see. Only one child in seven offered any suggestion, but again teenage concerns were prominent: news about teenagers, information about jobs available to them, and teenage sports were the gaps in coverage most often mentioned.

The Emergence of Worldly Concerns: News Exposure

Although children are most interested in the parts of the paper that are easier or more fun to read, as they mature greater attention begins to be paid to the front page and other straight news content in the daily paper. This is not only true of newspaper news: exposure to news also increases through all the media, as the wider world begins to assume a clearer shape in children's consciousness (see table 34).

Table 34

EXPOSURE TO THE NEWS, BY AGE

	Age:			
Read "most" or "some of the time":	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
Front page	24%	55%	74%	83%
Local news	16	45	65	77
National news	13	35	58	67
International news	10	21	41	52
Listened to radio news yesterday	12	26	43	55
Watch TV news "most days"	13	23	41	40
Read Time, other newsweekly in past month	NA*	16	25	35
Bases:	(429)	(368)	(363)	(357)

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*Children in this age group were not asked this question.

As with adults, those who read the newspaper more show a correlatively greater interest in news from all sources. Children at every age who are newspaper readers watch television news and listen to radio news more than those who never (or only occasionally) read a daily. With the approach of adolescence the gap narrows appreciably in TV news watching, once again showing the complementary character of the two as news-providers -- this time for children (see table 35). And the norms for yesterday news exposure shown by older teenagers are quite close to those for young adults,[1] displaying an essential continuity in the growth of news-consumption interests across the generations.

Children's Activities: Where Does the Newspaper Fit In?

Newspaper reading isn't the only kind of activity that shows growth or change as children grow older. It engages only a small amount of their attention and energies: children's free time is occupied by more diverting kinds of things that they enjoy more. Do readers show differing profiles of activities on a daily basis than other children? Are they less active in their outdoor and home-based pursuits? And how does the newspaper fit with other media activities?

We began the interview by asking children to tell us about the kinds of things they like to do in their free time, and followed up

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1) The complementary role of newspapers and TV as news sources for adults is shown in the findings of another Readership Project-supported study, which also contains data on news exposure through all the mass media. See The Daily Diet of News (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1978).

Table 35

EXPOSURE TO BROADCAST NEWS BY CHILDREN'S NEWSPAPER READING

(In percentages)

By age and frequency of newspaper reading:		Listened to radio news yesterday	Watch TV news "most days"	Bases:*
6- 8:	Child reads paper			
	Every day, most days	24%	40%	(29)
	Less often	18	12	(111)
	Never	9	11	(289)
9-11:	Child reads paper			
	Every day, most days	40%	36%	(86)
	Less often	28	26	(137)
	Never	16	12	(146)
12-14:	Child reads paper			
	Every day, most days	52%	51%	(155)
	Less often	47	35	(116)
	Never	26	32	(93)
15-17:	Child reads paper			
	Every day, most days	59%	44%	(186)
	Less often	55	32	(107)
	Never	45	36	(65)

*Bases are all children in each age and reading category.

by asking about fourteen specific activities, including their use of various broadcast and print media. (The latter provided a framework for the analysis of daily media exposure in this and other reports on the study of children and adolescents.) The resulting age profiles offer fascinating glimpses of how children's interests wax and wane as they mature (see table 36).

When children in each age group who do and don't read a newspaper are compared, in most cases it is the newspaper-reading child who does more: playing sports, listening to records, spending time with friends, engaging in crafts or hobbies, etc. They are about as likely to watch TV or listen to the radio on most days, but at any age they are more likely to read magazines and books as a regular part of their daily schedule. Socializing grows in importance, and the telephone gets ever more firmly attached to young ears as a handy way of reaching out to friends beginning with age 9, but daily shopping declines with age, as older children stop accompanying their mothers on shopping trips. Record playing and radio listening jump quickly as a daily activity with the onset of the teenage years, while comic book reading (never very high) shrinks appreciably as an everyday pastime. And watching television is a part of most children's daily lives from the earliest years.

Based on these detailed findings, newspaper reading seems to fit comfortably into children's daily schedules. Reading of books and magazines is a more variable activity as they grow older, but the reading habit becomes more firmly seated earlier among newspaper

Table 36

DAILY FREE TIME ACTIVITIES OF CHILDREN BY AGE AND NEWSPAPER READING*

(Percent saying "a lot" or "everyday, most days")**

	6-8		9-11		12-14		15-17	
Daily Activities of Children***	Freq. Rdr.	Never Reads	Freq. Rdr.	Never Reads	Freq. Rdr.	Never Reads	Freq. Rdr.	Never Reads
Media:								
Watch TV	86%	84%	91%	79%	94%	87%	85%	85%
Listen to the radio	26	34	73	46	78	76	93	89
Read, look at a magazine	48	23	47	27	41	37	48	31
Read (nonschool) book or story	40	37	44	26	32	21	25	14
Read comic books	40	18	22	17	10	18	3	3
Nonmedia Activities:								
Get together with friends	81	77	80	76	80	70	85	85
Talk to friends on telephone	24	29	65	40	72	67	75	57
Play sports, do gymnastics	48	56	86	63	84	65	68	57
Play records	35	30	38	24	61	48	60	55
Do arts and crafts, hobby	57	39	30	38	33	23	16	9
Go shopping, window shopping	45	29	13	19	21	14	23	17
Bases:	(29)	(289)	(86)	(146)	(155)	(93)	(186)	(65)

* Those who read a paper less often than "everyday" or "most days" are not shown.

** 6-8 year-olds were asked whether they did these things "a lot, a little, or never"; older children were asked for more detailed information on a weekly basis. The youngest saying "a lot" and those over the age of 9 who said "everyday" or "most days" are the "frequent readers" in this table.

*** Newspaper reading, club or team meetings and after school lessons are omitted. The former is used in the table to classify children; few children took lessons or attended a meeting regularly.

readers, suggesting that the development of reading skills and motivations affects and is affected by the growing appeal of reading materials of all types, including the daily newspaper. The child who is a "good reader" is thus identifiable at a very early age, and his or her regular use of a newspaper is a good indicator of this more basic orientation.

THE FORMING OF CITIZENS: EFFECTS OF NEWSPAPER READING

In this section we turn from the question of how newspaper readership patterns develop and examine the effects of that reading upon children's political development and interests in the world outside the familiar confines of home, school and neighborhood. The study of political socialization -- "the learning process by which the political norms and behaviors acceptable to an ongoing political system are transmitted from generation to generation", according to one definition[1] -- has become a lively area of social research in the past few decades. What children learn, how the content of the political culture is conveyed and received, and the effects of parents, schooling, the mass media, and other influences have all been the objects of systematic study and debate.[2]

Our limited purpose in the analysis that follows is to isolate and assess the specific contributions made by children's newspaper reading to their awareness of public figures and issues, beliefs about certain rights underlying the working of our political system, and their interest in topics that form the staples of press and TV

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1) Roberta S. Sigel, "Assumptions About the Learning of Political Values", Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, Vol. 361 (1965), 1-9.

2) For an extensive review of the literature, see Stanley A. Renshon, ed., Handbook of Political Socialization (New York: Free Press, 1977).

news coverage. Children have less often been studied than adults in past work on the mass media's effects;[1] the role of newspapers has been given the least attention in the literature that exists on this topic.

Our approach to the measurement of children's political learning and interests was shaped by our awareness of the difficulties that past studies have confronted in defining and measuring the elusive facts, beliefs, and attitudes that children are assumed to be acquiring as they mature. Our choice of items used to assess their politically-relevant knowledge, interests, and beliefs was guided by their presumptive status as news or as beliefs and values that are at the heart of citizenship education, whether carried out in the schools, through parent-child interactions, by the mass media (directly or indirectly), or in other spheres of the child's life. Here as elsewhere, the content of the questions had to be concretely phrased and at least potentially accessible to children, not so exotic or detailed that they would unfairly tax their capacities or pose a threat to their self-esteem by resembling a quiz for which they had no preparation. We tried to use phrasing and content that might strike a familiar note in the mind of even the youngest child, so that the resulting differences in responses could be fairly ascribed to what they do or don't know or believe, rather than to the severity or vagueness of the entire set of questions themselves.

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1) See Steven H. Chaffee et al, "Mass Communication in Political Socialization", in Renshon, op.cit., 223-258.

Children's Awareness of Public Figures and Issues

Question: "I'm going to name some people or things in the news, and I'd like you to tell me what you happen to know about them. If you don't know about them, that's okay."

-- Jimmy Carter
-- Equal Rights Amendment
-- Martin Luther King, Jr.
-- Inflation
-- Anwar Sadat
-- Donnie and Marie Osmond
-- The SALT Talks

How familiar are children with the domestic and foreign events, issues, and personalities that are highly prominent in daily news coverage by all the news media? All of the ones used in this question were making news just prior to or during the period of the survey, with the exception of Martin Luther King, Jr. As a significant historical figure, however, he is often mentioned in social studies classes and in news stories about minority affairs, and of course he was the most prominent living Black American during the growing years of at least the older teenagers. The Osmonds were added to lighten the burden of replying and to guarantee at least one successful identification.[1]

We used an open-ended question to test children's knowledge in order to ensure that we were not simply measuring issue- or name-recognition. The scores children achieved were based upon their "correct" identifications of the six public figures and issues. Criteria of correctness were fairly liberal: for example, "Jimmy

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1) Donnie and Marie Osmond did turn out to be easily identifiable -- by 70 percent of the youngest children and by 85 percent of those over age 12 -- thus showing the image-forming power of television (at least in the case of popular entertainers).

Carter" was coded as correctly identified if any reference was made to his being a national leader, in Washington, President, etc. Or identification of ERA was considered to be correct if any reference was made to differences or difficulties in equal treatment of women. Thus, the threshold for accurate identifications was deliberately set quite low for each.[1]

Notwithstanding this, children's levels of awareness of these newsworthy personalities and topics are extremely low. Only "Jimmy Carter" (as the President) commanded high (61%) recognition by even the youngest children.[2] The nation's number one domestic issue -- inflation -- does not become a meaningful concept for children until the teen years; nor, as shown in the next section, does their personal interest in "the rising cost of living" as a topic grow faster than their conceptual grasp, even though the latter phrasing made it a more easily understood notion. By the age of 15 to 17, when most adolescents have become steady consumers in their own right, only 63 percent were able to give any reasonable definition of inflation, such as "prices rising, things cost more", etc. Overall, only 30 percent of all children correctly identified the term (see Figure 2).

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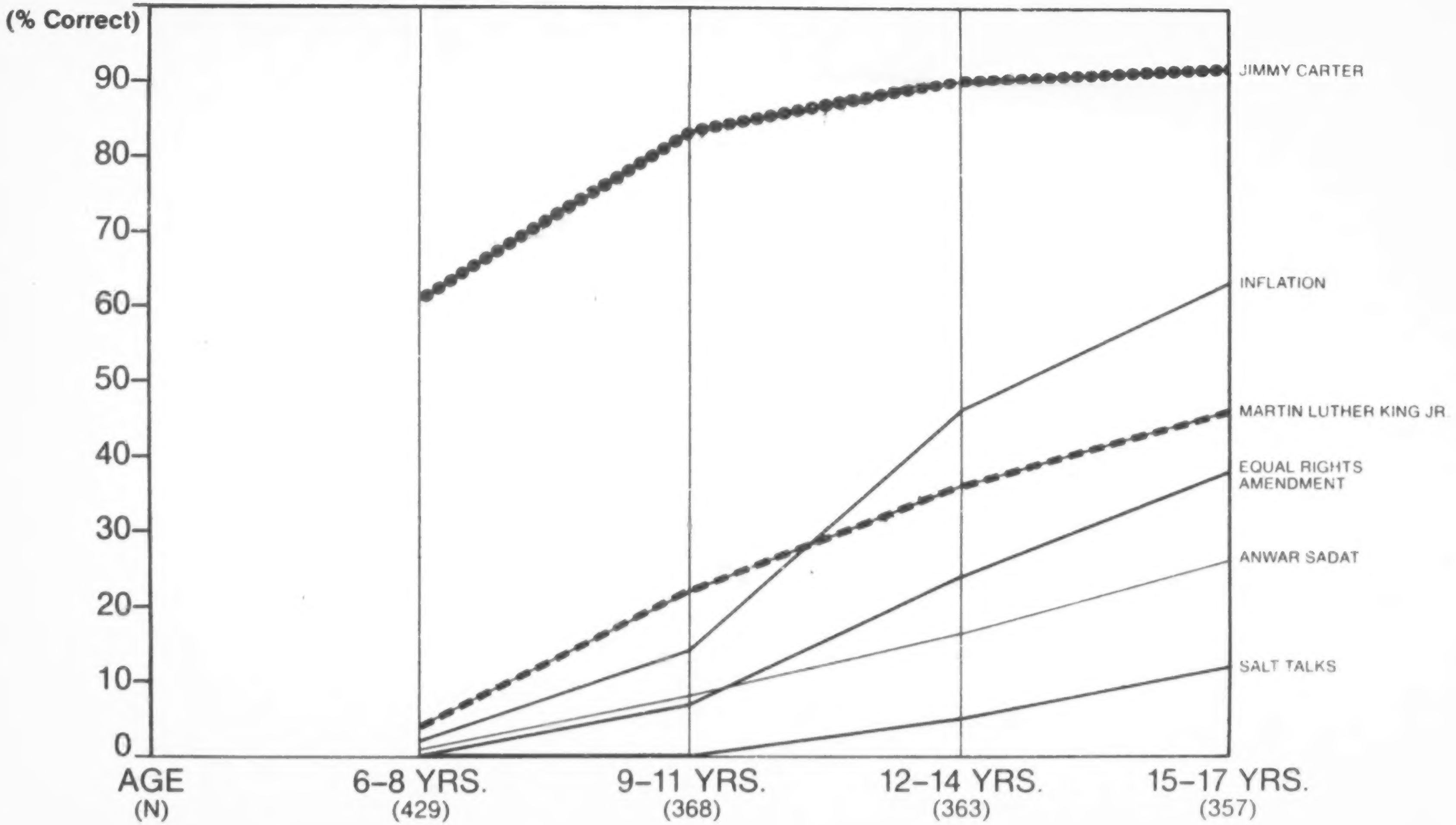
[1] Correct answers were coded separately from ambiguous, incorrect, or "don't know" answers. In fact, the vast majority of other-than-correct responses fell into the "don't know" category, attesting to the children's hesitancy or uncertainty and not simply their ignorance.

[2] Studies of children's political awareness have invariably shown that the Presidency (or the occupant of that office) receives the clearest recognition of any element in the political system by children at even younger ages than these 6-8 year-olds.

**Figure 2.
Children's awareness of
six public figures
and issues.**



Martin Luther King, Jr. is not well known to any significant proportion of younger children, and only one-quarter of all children correctly identified him. Understandably, non-white children did better, but not by much: 36 percent were familiar with his name, vs. 23 percent of white children. On the other three items, involving issues that are conceptually difficult to comprehend (ERA, SALT talks) or (especially in the case of Egypt's President Anwar Sadat), very distant from children's concerns, familiarity was minimal even for the oldest teenagers, despite their more prolonged, greater daily exposure to news from various sources.

Does newspaper reading make any appreciable difference in this generally disheartening picture? The answer, for pre-teenagers especially and for most of the six items, is that it does. Frequent readers do particularly better in defining inflation and ERA correctly, and in being able to recognize President Sadat. The biggest differences in the scores achieved are of course related to age, which in this context means (among other things) a greater familiarity that is based upon classroom discussion and formal instruction. The effects of age are most clearly apparent in the average scores achieved by the children (ranging from 0-6), and in all cases, the greater the use of the newspaper, the higher the score in each age group of children (see table 37).

Behind these correlations lie all the factors analyzed earlier that combine to make some children more faithful newspaper readers

Table 37

CHILDREN'S AWARENESS OF PUBLIC FIGURES AND ISSUES BY AGE AND NEWSPAPER READING

(Percent who gave correct response)

By Age and Newspaper Reading*	Jimmy Carter	Martin Luther King, Jr.	Anwar Sadat	Inflation	Equal Rights Amendment	SALT Talks	Average # Correct (0-6)	INDEX**
Total Children	81%	26%	12%	30%	16%	4%	1.69	100
6-8 year-olds								
Read everyday, most days	72	16	-	-	-	-	.88	52
Read less often	64	1	1	4	1	-	.70	41
Never read a paper	59	4	1	1	-	-	.66	39
9-11 year-olds								
Read everyday, most days	90	34	17	30	13	-	1.85	109
Read less often	83	24	7	13	7	-	1.33	79
Never read a paper	79	12	3	6	3	-	1.03	61
12-14 year-olds								
Read everyday, most days	91	42	21	53	29	7	2.44	144
Read less often	87	36	18	49	24	3	2.16	128
Never read a paper	94	26	7	31	14	4	1.74	103
15-17 year-olds								
Read everyday, most days	92	43	37	72	43	18	3.05	180
Read less often	93	52	15	58	41	7	2.66	157
Never read a paper	92	42	14	45	16	3	2.12	125

*See table 32 for bases in each group.

**100 = 1.69 (average score for total sample of children).

than others -- social class, availability and parental readership, etc. -- which create a chain of causation leading to the effects described by these findings.[1] Whatever the pushes and pulls which influence a child's motivation to read a paper, if he or she does so regularly, political awareness (even at this superficial level) is significantly enhanced.

Children's Political Learning: Civil Rights Beliefs

The second dimension of political socialization that we measured was the children's political learning: their knowledge and beliefs about aspects of the political system and its underpinnings in the Bill of Rights. The specific items chosen were adapted from a longer list used periodically by the National Assessment of Educational Progress to test children's understanding of our political and civil rights.[2] Here are the items, with the "correct" answers:

a. Presidential Power:	"Does the President have the right to do anything affecting the United States that he wants to do?" /No/
b. Free Press:	"Should a newspaper or magazine be allowed to print something that criticizes an important person in the government?" /Yes/

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[1] A more complex analysis of the effects of these variables, using multiple regression to sort out their independent and combined effects, showed that frequency of newspaper reading was second only to age as a significant determinant of the children's scores when other variables were taken into account. A paper that reports these findings is in preparation.

[2] See Education Commission of the States, National Assessment of Educational Progress: Political Knowledge and Attitudes (Government Printing Office, 1970;1973).

c. Free Speech: "Should a person who doesn't believe in God be allowed to make speeches about it?" /Yes/

	For 6-11 year olds	For 12-17 year olds
d. Political Access:	"Can anyone start a new political party and try to get elected to run the government?" /Yes/	"Can anyone start a new political party and have candidates run for public office?" /Yes/
e. Citizen Power:	"Can your parents or other grownups affect what the people who run your town decide to do?" /Yes/	"Can your parents or other grownups have any influence on decisions made by local government?" /Yes/

Correctly-given answers not only indicate a child's beliefs about the rights of individual American citizens and the constitutional restraints on or rights afforded to the president and the press. In two cases at least, they also indicate the child's sense of the appropriateness of such rights, an attitude toward them that invests them with legitimacy as important political values.

How knowledgeable and supportive are children when it comes to these vital issues? The answers are somewhat unsettling, whether viewed from a factual or attitudinal standpoint. Not until the age of 12 do majorities of children begin to show awareness or approval of these protections and political opportunities, and significant minorities reject any or all of them even into the late teen years (see figure 3). The youngest children were almost as often unsure about as disapproving of these rights and restraints, but the proportions who said they "don't know" drop off sharply after the age of 9 and are insignificant among teenagers.

To be sure, citizenship education is a continuous process throughout childhood and adulthood, and many studies have shown that these matters remain controversial for many adults.[1] And one might also see in these findings some traces of the political disaffection or cynicism (not simply ignorance or disapproval) that are part of the climate of our times. It is reassuring to see the steady growth of awareness and convictions that accompanies maturity, as civics lessons and exposure to the political process begin to take hold and affect children's attitudes and beliefs.

As before, we can ask whether newspaper reading significantly affects children's political beliefs and knowledge, and again the answer is that it does, especially as they grow older. Using the average scores (ranging from 0-5) achieved by children who read the paper regularly, less often, or not at all as a guide, the findings show that newspaper reading has a significant effect. At every age, those who read a paper daily or nearly every day are more familiar with and supportive of these political rights and restraints. The

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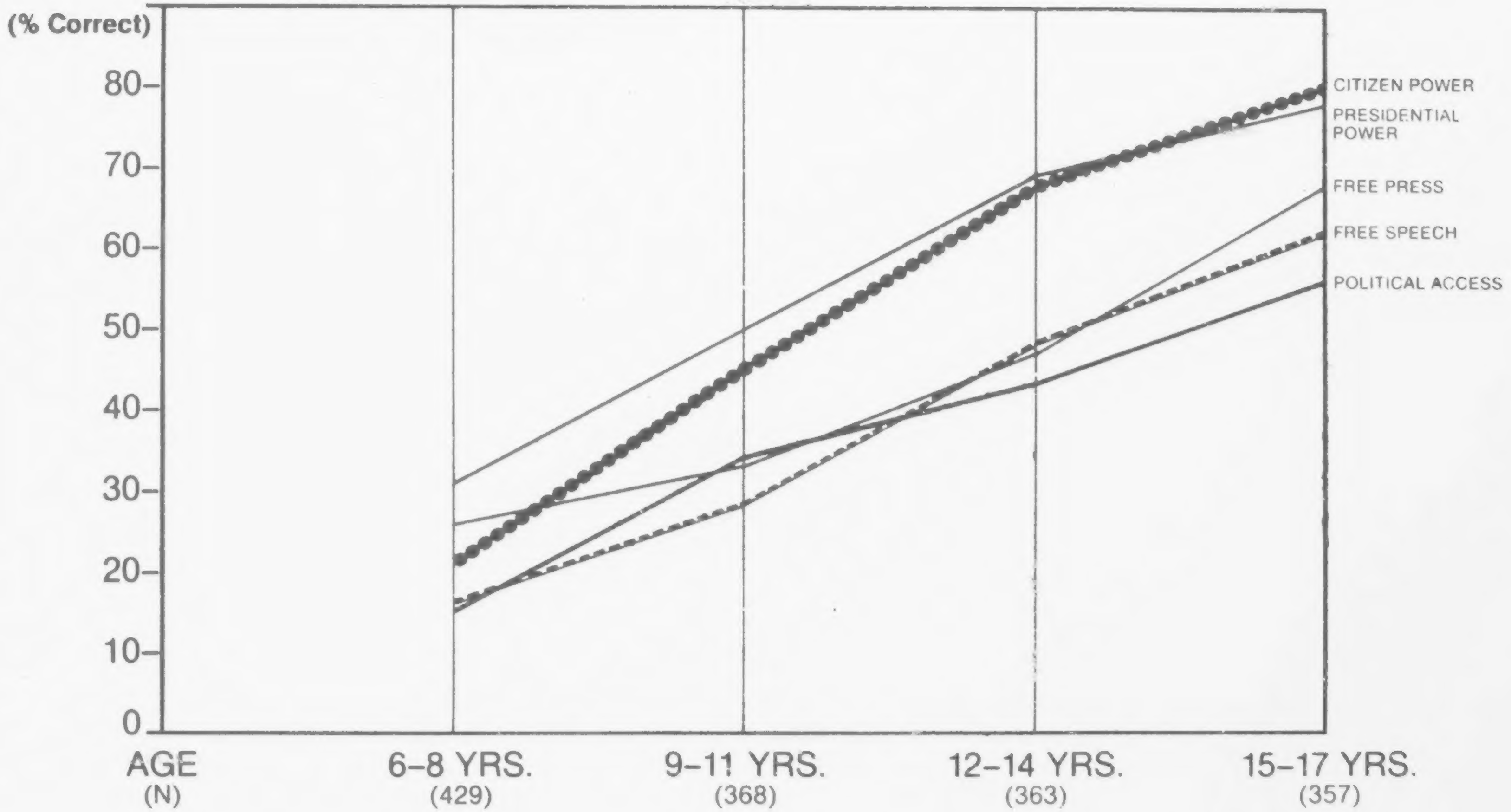
1) The classical study on this topic was that of Samuel Stouffer, done in 1954. See his Communism, Conformity and Civil Liberties (Doubleday, 1955). More recently, his study was repeated by several social scientists; see Clyde Nunn et al., Tolerance for Nonconformity (Jossey-Bass, 1978) and James A. Davis, "Communism, Conformity, Cohorts, and Categories: American Tolerance in 1954 and 1972-73", American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 81, No. 3 (November 1975), 491-513.

Figure 3.
Children's knowledge and beliefs about civil rights.



gap between them and those who never read a paper widens steadily with advancing age (see table 38).[1]

A Note on First Amendment Freedoms

The two items that most clearly define attitudes, rather than beliefs about whether something is or isn't possible in our political system, deserve special attention. These two posed the issues of freedom of the press to criticize someone important in government and the freedom of atheists to speak out publicly about their beliefs. When the full range of replies is examined, what emerges might be termed the "ecology" of democratic attitudes: the social distribution of support among children for these two First Amendment Rights (see table 39).[2]

As noted earlier, approval of both freedoms rises with age as uncertainty is replaced by ever-firmer convictions. Children from higher-status families are consistently more supportive of these rights, whether the family's status is indicated by mother's education or income or by family structure and location (i.e. the suburbs obviously having more families with a higher social class position).[3]

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1) A special regression analysis confirmed the independent significance of newspaper reading as second only to age in accounting for variations in children's scores, when other variables are simultaneously taken into consideration.

2) As these attitudes were assessed by use of only one item each, the resulting alignments of opinion are less stable than would have been yielded by a battery of items.

3) For an analysis of how these social class indicators are interrelated, see Mass Media in the Family Setting (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980).

Table 38

CHILDREN'S CIVIL RIGHTS KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS

(Percent who gave "correct" response)

By Age and Newspaper Reading		a. Presidential Power	b. Free Press	c. Free Speech	d. Political Access	e. Citizen Power	Average # "correct" (0-5)	INDEX*
Total Children		56%	43%	37%	36%	52%	2.23	100
6-8	Read everyday, most days	45	33	14	29	33	1.53	69
	Read less often	38	26	16	13	22	1.14	51
	Never read a paper	27	26	16	14	20	1.03	46
9-11	Read everyday, most days	55	37	40	33	51	2.16	97
	Read less often	52	37	30	36	51	2.05	92
	Never read a paper	45	27	18	33	35	1.57	70
12-14	Read everyday, most days	70	46	55	49	84	3.04	136
	Read less often	75	53	46	46	64	2.84	127
	Never read a paper	61	39	39	30	45	2.14	96
15-17	Read everyday, most days	86	72	70	65	84	3.77	169
	Read less often	74	69	57	50	76	3.25	146
	Never read a paper	61	56	43	42	73	2.74	123

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*100 = 2.23 (average # correct for total sample of children)

Table 39

ATTITUDES TOWARD A FREE PRESS AND FREEDOM OF SPEECH BY AGE OF CHILD AND FAMILY STATUS

	Free Press:*			Free Speech:*			
	(% say)			(% say)			
	Yes	No	Don't Know	Yes	No	Don't Know	Bases
Total Children	43	40	17	37	44	19	(1517)
By Age of Child							
6 - 8	26	36	38	16	50	34	(429)
9 - 11	33	49	18	28	51	21	(368)
12 - 14	47	48	5	48	43	9	(363)
15 - 17	68	29	3	62	32	6	(357)
By Race							
White	44	43	13	39	46	15	(1167)
Non-white	36	34	31	31	38	31	(326)
By Mother's Education							
Some college, plus	50	35	15	45	39	16	(374)
High school graduate	41	44	15	40	43	17	(703)
Less than high school graduate	39	40	21	27	50	23	(438)
By Family Income							
$20,000 or more	48	43	9	46	40	14	(466)
$10,000 - 19,999	40	44	16	33	50	16	(503)
Less than $10,000	38	34	28	26	44	30	(391)
By Family Structure							
Male and female head	44	40	16	37	46	17	(1235)
Single parent head	36	40	24	37	36	27	(282)
By Region							
Northeast	48	32	20	45	31	24	(402)
North Central	45	44	11	40	48	12	(405)
South	37	43	20	28	51	21	(480)
West	41	43	16	37	48	15	(230)
By Geographic Location							
Metro,central cities	44	36	20	36	41	23	(504)
Metro, suburban fringes	51	36	13	47	38	15	(407)
Small town & rural	36	47	17	31	51	17	(606)

*Note: A "yes" response was classified as the "correct" answer to each of these questions.

Free speech for atheists seemed to be a generally more troublesome proposition, especially for children from the lowest-status families, who tended to be more unsure or disapproving on this count than were others. Though small in size in some instances, the differences among children are fairly consistent on both measures.

If we set aside uncertain responses, which are largely concentrated among the very young, and consider what affects the tide of support most decisively, the results suggest that in addition to newspaper readership, three factors outweigh others in their effects on attitudes. These are the onset of adolescence, differences in the prevailing family climate, and region. In the last-named instance, other things being equal, two regions stand out as orienting children in opposing directions: the Northeast inclining them toward a somewhat more liberal set of attitudes and the South affecting attitudes in the reverse direction, especially in the case of religious freedom.[1]

None of these is what policy researchers call "manipulable" variables: those aspects of a situation that are amenable to programmatic change or specially targeted efforts. The prospects for improving children's images of the political process and support for civil rights must depend upon the slow process of civic education. But there is one strategic fact that can be extracted from these findings. The same factors that make for higher newspaper readership by adults and children (and frequent newspaper reading itself) are all associated with firmer support for

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1) See John Shelton Reed, The Enduring South (Heath, 1972) for a comparative analysis of persisting regional differences and the special character of Southern religious sentiments.

press freedom. Thus, intensified efforts to promote the regular reading of papers carry with them the likely bonus of affecting favorably the current and future climate of public opinion in which a free press flourishes.

Does the Newspaper Affect Interest in News Topics?

A third set of questions measured children's interest in ten public issues. Each child was asked how interested he or she was in some news topics that their families might talk about. The topics were chosen with an eye toward representing the range of current issues given extensive news coverage in the press and on TV, and phrased in readily-understandable terms:

Question: "Here are some things in the news that families sometimes talk about. How interested are you personally in these topics?"(Very, somewhat, not at all)

What President Carter is doing
What your town or county government is doing
Things that happen in your neighborhood
Pollution problems
Young people using drugs
The rising cost of living
Crimes and robberies
The problem of losing or not being able to find a job
What's going on in other countries
What's happening in the schools

When the list of news topics is ordered by the highest degree of interest shown in each, and the results are compared for children of different ages, two things become apparent (see table 40). One is a steady, and in some cases dramatic growth of interest in all but the last two --

presidential activities and foreign news -- and the other is that until the teen years (and even after that), children's interest stay pretty close to exciting matters close at hand: neighborhood, school, crimes and youthful drug use. Unemployment becomes a matter of deep concern only late in adolescence, as adult prospects and problems begin to assume clearer shape, and awareness of inflation's impact also jumps significantly. Apart from these two, the rank order of topics is fairly constant for each age group, suggesting a general broadening of the range of interests with increasing age.

Is reading a newspaper linked with this widening of the scope of children's interests, as one might suspect? Again, as with the other aspects of socialization during childhood that we assessed, the answer is that it does measurably affect the range or intensity of interests that children profess to have in these topics. Slowly at first, and then with gathering force the news about the world outside begins to impinge upon their consciousness, although at any age the children's agenda of concerns reflects neither the balance of content in news coverage nor the priorities accorded to the same topics by their parents.[1]

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1) Mothers were asked about the same topics, but in their case the frequency with which each figured in family conversations was the focus of the question. For an analysis of TV and newspaper content coverage, see Seven Days in March (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1978). The extent of family discussions on these topics is shown in Mass Media in the Family Setting (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980).

Table 40

CHILDREN'S INTEREST IN TEN NEWS TOPICS BY AGE

	Percent Very Interested:				Total Children*		
News Topic	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	Very Interested	Somewhat Interested	Not At All Interested
Things happening in neighborhood	39%	48%	62%	60%	52%	32%	16%
What's happening in schools	37	44	49	54	45	37	17
Crimes and robberies	24	43	44	50	39	34	26
Young people using drugs	16	34	49	51	37	29	33
Losing,not finding a job	17	29	39	61	36	26	38
Rising cost of living	16	29	42	54	34	32	33
Pollution problems	19	30	35	39	30	36	33
Town/county government doings	12	15	23	24	18	46	35
What President Carter's doing	17	15	12	19	16	48	36
News about other countries	12	12	12	16	13	43	43

* Each row in the columns under "Total Children" adds to 100% of the interviewed children. The balance of respondents in each row answered "don't know."

To depict the growth of interest in and across these topics, we scored and summed each child's answers into an average score, which ranged from 0 (no interest in any) to 20 (very interested in all ten). The results are shown in Figure 4; they show significantly stronger interest among newspaper readers than non-readers until late adolescence, when presumably other influences diminish the special stimulus provided by newspaper reading. Evidence presented elsewhere showed that the newspaper in classroom use acts to a degree as a stimulus for those who don't have one at home regularly, and supplements the impact of the daily paper on children's interests in homes where it is present.[1] Thus, where available and read, the newspaper begins early to play a major part in opening children's eyes and minds to public concerns and issues in the news. And while family social class factors strongly affect the newspaper's availability in their homes, and changes in age are most closely correlated with the widening range of their interests, when these and other influences are controlled, the daily reading of a newspaper emerges as the single most important contributor to children's developing interests in news topics.[2]

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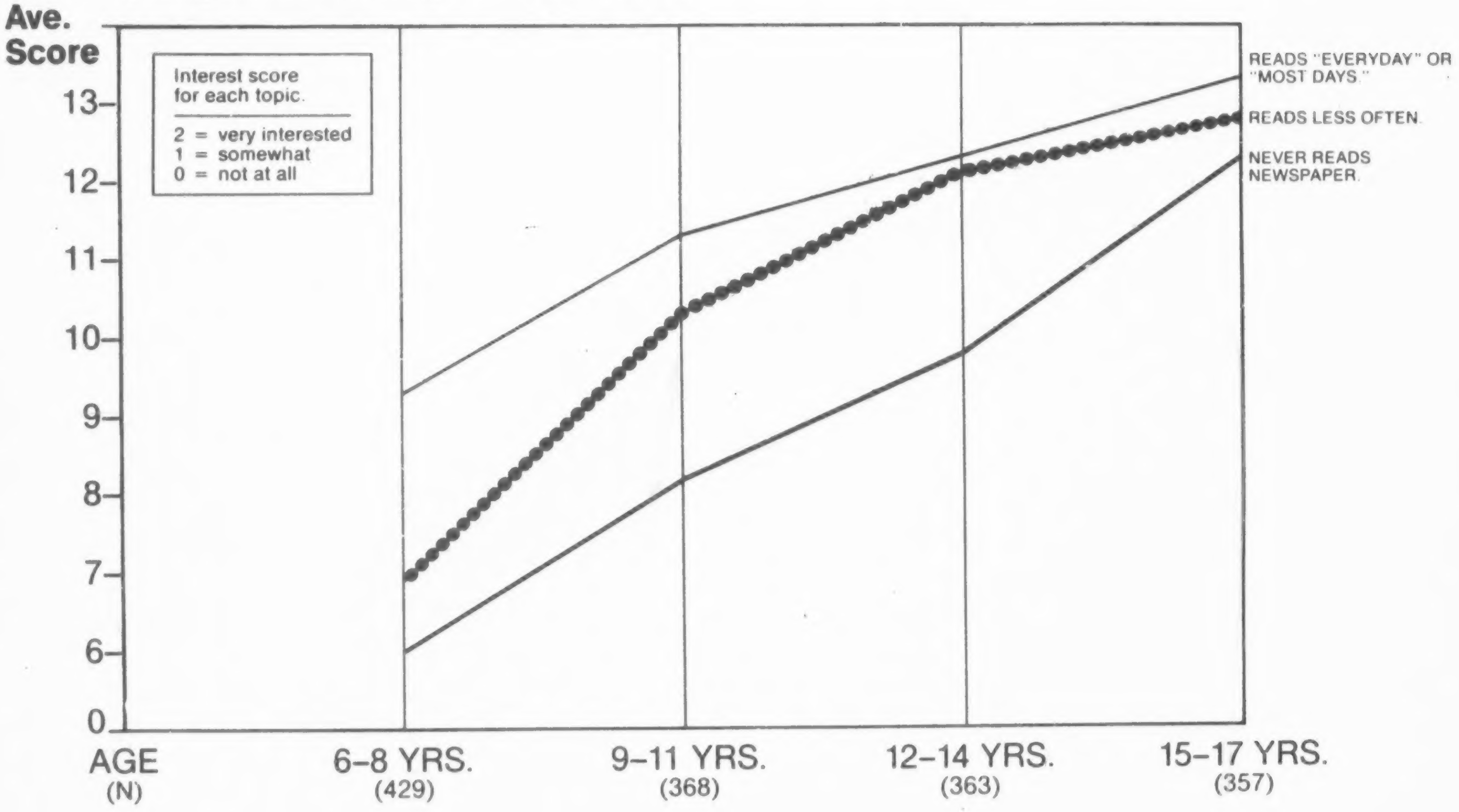
1) See Daily Newspapers in American Classrooms (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980).

2) The independent effect of children's newspaper reading was established by a regression analysis that also incorporated the following variables: age, family income, family structure, mother's employment, geographic region, location (city size), mother's education, mother's community involvement, household TV use, children's TV viewing, newspaper availability, parental newspaper reading--all of which had potential or demonstrable impacts on the children's news interests. (The same set of variables were used in the regression analyses noted earlier in this section of the report).

**Figure 4.
Interest in Ten news topics
by daily newspaper reading.**

(Range 0-20: Average Score = 10.0)



In this section on children's political socialization, we have seen that with advancing age, children's superficial awareness of significant political personalities and issues grows unevenly but steadily; that their beliefs and attitudes about the political system and civil rights become more affirmative; and that their interests in issues on the public agenda broaden and deepen. These complex developmental processes are significantly shaped by the family environment and also, it can be inferred, by their formal education. But on each of the three sets of measures examined, to the impacts of family and school must be added those of the newspaper as a daily or periodic "teacher" in the process of citizenship education. (By comparison, on the first two socialization variables -- awareness and political learning -- there was no link between TV watching and changes in the scores children achieved, and the growth of interests accompanying increased TV viewing were small in magnitude.)[1] Based on this array of findings, it can be confidently asserted that the newspaper in children's hands exerts a strong influence on the forming of their political perspectives as well as on their ability to assume their place in our society as democratic citizens.

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1) These and many other "nonfindings" have been excluded from this report to keep its size to more manageable proportions. Inquiries on such topics can be addressed to NAB's Research Department.

What Can Newspapers Do About Children's Newspaper Reading?

These detailed findings on children's evolving habits, interests and attitudes contain a number of useful implications for newspaper decision makers. Currently, a growing number of papers are experimenting with specially tailored feature pages or sections for children, such as the "Mini-Page," the "Smile Factory," "Kidsday," "Dynamite," and others. Perhaps the most ambitious effort is that of the Bank Street College of Education's "Three to Get Ready," which is designed to be a print equivalent of "Sesame Street." All of these are meant to give children a part of the paper that they can read easily, enjoy, and readily identify as written just for them. Some, in fact, are being partially written by children.

The data show that children's interests in different parts of the paper vary widely, with a few parts -- comics, sports -- gaining and holding attention from the earliest ages well into adolescence. There is no question that the entertaining features are what children respond to first, and that reading the daily paper imposes burdens on them that the more diverting media do not. It would be helpful, therefore, to lighten the general tone of the paper, making it appear less formidable by offering some content that invites children's reading without strain.

But the data also show that reading interests are strongly segmented by sex and age and that in some cases these divergences become more pronounced as children approach adulthood. This segmenting, much like the patterning of adult newspaper interests, needs to be kept in mind when considering special features that might attract children's loyalties and help turn them into regular readers. Newspapers must cater not only to the changing interests of children of differing ages, but also help them make the transition to adulthood and the world they will confront. Parents deeply value this kind of assistance, and want their children to read newspapers primarily because of it -- both at home and in school. And as they grow older, the children themselves show an increasing concern with hard news, initially with news about the familiar things in their lives, but with the onset of adolescence their scope of interests begins to widen to encompass the full range of news content offered by their local daily paper.

They don't seem to like reading a paper very much, but they do so increasingly and rate its informational value more and more highly. This pattern connotes growing respect rather than affection, a realistic appraisal of the newspaper's main contributions in informing its primarily adult readership. In this they probably do not differ much from earlier generations of children, notwithstanding the turbulent era through which these children have lived and the television's place as a fixture in their daily lives. Children's reluctance to become concerned about national or foreign news topics is understandable; the stresses and crises of personal growth in all their dimensions have an immediacy that these topics cannot hope to match. But parents, educators, and events themselves all conspire to move children's attention outward beyond the confines of the self, family, and peer group, a process whose progress is charted in their reading behavior and their interests in types of newspaper content that take on ever greater relevance for them.

Recognition of the developing bond between children's perceptions of what's in the paper for them and what's in store for them as they approach adulthood forms a useful basis for editorial and promotional planning. News need not be downgraded as inherently outside the circle of children's concerns. Nor should it be, if children are to become adult newspaper readers. As we have seen, they step up their intake of news through all the media, and by late adolescence their news exposure is close to the levels reached by young adults. But greater stress in writing on the dramatic and personal elements of news can help this process along. Much can be learned from the appeal of sports news to children. It embodies themes and values that are important to them (and to many adults) -- individual prowess and skills, keeping track of winners and losers, struggling against the odds, identification with local heroes -- that are the stuff of fantasy as well as conversation with their friends. The comics have great pulling power for children: if they are downsized or downgraded, this can have a detrimental effect on building up future newspaper audiences. And children need to become more aware of what else is in the paper; most have only shadowy images of the newspaper until fairly late in the teenage years.

The need to increase children's awareness of newspaper content casts into bold relief the role that parents and schools play in this process. We have seen how critical it is to the formation of children's reading habits that the paper is in the home daily, and that parents show their personal reliance on the newspaper by reading one regularly. Parents try to guide their children's media uses by encouragement and by attempts to regulate what and how much they do with broadcast and print media alike. They talk with the children about what's in the paper; but is there enough in each one daily that lends itself to this kind of sharing of interests across the generations? And we have seen that while girls and boys begin to diverge in their reading habits at an early age, they join in their expression of interest in more teen news and features that are geared to that age group. These separate and shared interests should be kept in mind when decisions about news and features or special sections are being made in the interest of attracting future readers.

Parents' efforts to encourage their children's reading can be helped by editorial decisions about content and also by promotional work that is guided by the shared interests that newspapers and parents have in raising a generation that is better prepared to assume their responsibilities as citizens. Parents could profit from special assistance in helping them to encourage their children's newspaper reading, perhaps through a "Newspaper in the Home" campaign(that some papers are conducting), which highlights what they can do to help make their children more aware of the uses of the daily paper, including guides for use, special training in children's reading problems, etc.

The study also emphasizes the valuable supplemental role that NIE programs can play in concert with home use but perhaps more significantly for children who don't find the paper at home with any regularity, or even at all. As shown elsewhere,[1] school use is linked with more frequent reading outside the school, with greater esteem for what the daily paper has to offer children, and with heightened awareness of politically-relevant news that is important in the shaping of future citizens. The gains to be realized by NIE programs in all these respects are highly significant.

One clear warning emerges from many detailed findings that show the suburbs to be the most favorable environment,for newspaper readership. Their favored position is based on the higher income and education levels of residents, which every readership study shows as being strongly related to better readership. Yet for a number of reasons--distribution costs, carrier problems, newsprint costs, local shopping preferences that affect advertisers' choice of media--some metropolitan daily papers are reshaping their definitions of primary market zones for circulation and promotional purposes, and the suburbs are being relinquished or given lower priority as a market.

This strategy offers clear short-run gains in cost minimization; the long-term effects are more diffuse and less predictable by comparison. But seen from the standpoint of building future audiences of readers, it

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1) See Daily Newspapers in American Classrooms (Newspaper Advertising Bureau, 1980) for evidence on these points drawn from this study of children and adolescents.

may prove to be short-sighted. The suburbs, and urbanized centers within their orbits, continue to grow at a faster rate than the general population. If that is where the daily newspaper's prime constituency is located, current and future readers settling there need to be kept at the forefront of circulation planning.

On the editorial side, there are some knotty problems in offering adequate local coverage to suburbanites, whose little subcommunities have their own special character. Each would have to be given some targeted editorial coverage if the "local news" is to be securely tied to what is happening in each of them. Papers are increasingly zoning editions to permit this kind of coverage to be offered. Judging by the children's interests and those of their parents, this is a useful strategy to follow, and further experiments in tailoring the newspaper's local coverage would seem to be highly desirable.

Finally, the role models that parents themselves provide emerge as an important influence on children's newspaper reading. This suggests that a long-term editorial and promotional strategy that focuses on the needs and preferences of current readers can have far-reaching significance for future newspaper audiences. The long way round may be the shortest route to achieving the goal of making today's generation of children into tomorrow's newspaper readers.

APPENDIX A

TWO READING MEASURES: "YESTERDAY" vs. "EVERYDAY, MOST DAYS"

Among the various questions about newspaper reading that were included in this study, two dealt with frequency of newspaper reading. After being asked whether they ever read or look into a weekday copy of a newspaper, the children were asked how often they "usually read or look at a weekday copy of a paper," with a set of response categories that included "every day" and "most days." Then, following an interval with questions about the name of the newspapers they usually read and where they usually get to see or read a newspaper, they were asked a standard series of questions to measure "yesterday" reading: whether or not they had read a newspaper in the past week; what was the last day they had looked at a paper; and if the answer was "today" they were then asked when was the last time before today.

The proportions who said "every day" or "most days" were markedly similar in each age group to the proportions who emerged as "yesterday" readers. When the two measures are cross-tabulated, it appears that only one-third of the 6 - 8 year olds who said they read the paper every day or most days had read the paper yesterday, in large part because more of the 6 - 8 year olds said they only read one "most days" rather than "every day."

Among those who claimed to read the paper "most days," the proportion of yesterday readers increases with age as might be expected, but only up to the age of 15, when it drops. This suggests that 15-17 year olds may be offering a socially desirable answer when they say "most days," and that the more rigorous measure of reading -- "yesterday" reading -- is the preferable one to use in assessing children's readership.

Table 41

TWO MEASURES OF READING FREQUENCY: "YESTERDAY" VS. "EVERYDAY, MOST DAYS"

	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17
Total				
% read everyday,most days	7	24	43	52
% read yesterday	6	21	42	46
Bases:	(429)	(368)	(363)	(357)
Subgroups				
% read yesterday, among "everyday"and "most days" readers (combined)	36	63	81	71
Bases:	(29)	(86)	(155)	(186)
% read yesterday among "everyday"readers	67	73	91	84
Bases:	(12)	(48)	(90)	(134)
% read yesterday among "most days" readers	17	51	68	37
Bases:	(18)	(39)	(65)	(52)

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The following tables are provided for readers interested in obtaining a quick estimate of the stability of a given percentage or of the significance of the difference between two percentages.

Confidence Intervals for a Given Percentage
(at the 95% confidence level)

	Reported Percentage				
(Base for %)	10 or 90%	20 or 80%	30 or 70%	40 or 60%	50%
500	2.6	3.5	4.0	4.3	4.4
250	3.7	5.0	5.7	6.1	6.2
200	4.2	5.5	6.3	6.8	6.9
150	4.8	6.4	7.3	7.8	8.0
100	5.9	7.8	9.0	9.6	9.8
50	8.3	11.1	12.7	13.6	13.9
25	11.8	15.7	18.0	19.2	19.6

Example: If a report shows that 20% of all sampled respondents (when N = 500) answer in a particular way, the chances are about 95 out of 100 that the true value lies within ± 3.5% of that value, that is, that the range 16.5% - 23.5% contains the true value in the population.

Significance of Differences Between Percentages
(95% confidence level)

	Average of Reported Percentages				
Average of the Bases of Percentages Being Compared	10 or 90%	20 or 80%	30 or 70%	40 or 60%	50%
500	3.7	4.9	5.7	6.1	6.2
250	5.2	7.1	8.1	8.6	8.8
200	5.9	7.8	8.9	9.6	9.8
150	6.8	9.1	10.3	11.0	11.3
100	8.3	11.0	12.7	13.6	13.9
50	11.7	15.7	18.0	19.2	19.7
25	16.7	22.2	25.5	27.2	27.7

Example: A report shows that 33% of all respondents 30 to 39 years of age use a certain product and that only 27% of all respondents in the 40-to-49 age group use that product. Could this difference be due to chance?

> In this example assume a base of 500 for both age groups. The average of the percentages (33 + 27) equals 30% and the difference between the percentages is 6%. Since 6% is greater than 5.7% (the figure in the table for this base and percentage) the chances are about 95 out of 100 that the product is used significantly more by the 30-39 age group.

The table values are based on an assumption of simple random sampling. The figures may be too large if a stratified sampling technique was used and probably are too small if a cluster sampling technique was utilized. (For formulas used, see Q. McNemar, Psychological Statistics, pages 54, 60) The second table should be used with extreme caution if the bases being averaged are very different in size.